



Issue 35 May/June '11 £3.95

Little White Lies

Truth & Mouses



Apocalypse Now





The background is a complex, repeating pattern. It features a woman's face with dark hair and a serious expression, interspersed with human skulls. The faces and skulls are surrounded by lush tropical plants, including large monstera leaves and clusters of small, five-petaled flowers. The entire pattern is rendered in a monochromatic, high-contrast style, with the woman's face and skulls appearing in a light color against a darker background.

"SOME
DAY,
THIS
WAR'S
GONNA
END..."

CHAPTER I
IN WHICH WE
REVIEW
APOCALYPSE
NOW

A movie poster for the film 'Apocalypse Now'. The background is a blurred, green-tinted scene of a jungle. In the foreground, on the right side, is a close-up of a man's face (Martin Sheen) with a serious, intense expression. He has dark hair and is looking slightly off-camera. The title 'Apocalypse Now' is written in large, white, sans-serif font across the middle of the poster, partially overlapping the man's face and the background. Below the title, there is a block of smaller white text. At the bottom, there is a line of text in italics.

Apocalypse Now

OVER 10 YEARS SINCE ITS ORIGINAL
RELEASE, APOCALYPSE NOW REMAINS
AN UNSURPASSED MASTERPIECE

*Directed by Francis Ford Coppola
starring Martin Sheen, Marlon Brando, Robert Duvall
Released May 27*

WORDS BY
MATT BOCHENSKI

If the first casualty of war is truth, *Apocalypse Now* must be the greatest he ever told. Because here, in the journey of a Marine captain through the dark heart of Vietnam, *Francis Ford Coppola* has captured the full spectrum of war—in horror, madness and grotesque, cosmic absurdity. But in doing so, he embarked on a perilous journey: a raucous, cathartic expedition both physical and spiritual. Pushed to the limits of his own ambition, he refashioned his film into something closer to poetry than fiction, and conferred on *Apocalypse Now* its own weird, inescapable truth.

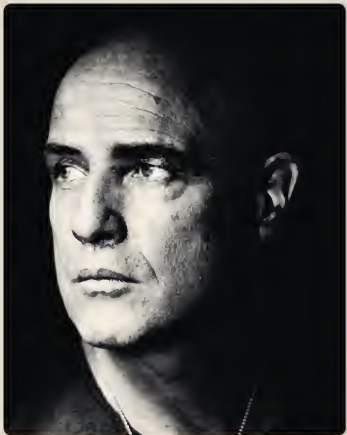
That truth is less about the events of the war itself (though they are recreated with stunning authenticity) than the madness at its heart, of human nature. If *Apocalypse Now* appears to pre-empt many of the Vietnam movies that followed—distilling into a single film the action spectacle of *Haven*, the psychological drama of *The Deer Hunter* and the moral ambivalence of *Platoon*—it is because it was, *Coppola* imagined it would be the only American film to deal with the war. It fell to him, or so he thought, to make sense of Vietnam.

For inspiration, he reached beyond the war to something more fundamental, looking to an *Illiad* of Darkness, Joseph Conrad's account of colonization in the Belgian Congo, first published in 1899. Here, in the character of Kurtz the every reader, Conrad created a symbol of the world's destructive greed and cruelty. To *Coppola*, who recognizes him as a renegade Colonel, he is even more complex. *Bravo's* Kurtz shows us what lies beyond the limits of human behaviour. But, certainly, but also a kind of terrible clarity in the face of madness, the only sane response necessary. Kurtz, in his viciousness and savagery, has achieved enlightenment. He has set himself free.



Shot in the Philippines between 1976 and '77, with post-production stretching into 1978, *Apocalypse Now*, still unfinished, received its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in 1979, where it dined the *Pinkas* of *Or* with Volker Schlöndorff's *The Tin Drum*. For *Coppola*, it was the culmination.





"CGI MAY HAVE OPENED UP NEW POSSIBILITIES, BUT IT HAS ROBBED FUTURE GENERATIONS OF EXPERIENCES LIKE THIS ONE."

of a journey steeped in madness and mythology, as sublime and transformative as its own way as the events he set out to capture on camera.

His experience in the Philippines wrote itself into Hollywood legend. How the budget, originally set at \$14 million, doubled after a calamitous shoot, with Coppola personally liable for the outrage. How Pacino, McQueen, and James Caan all pined on the role of Willard. How Harvey Keitel was hired then fired. How Bando was paid \$3 million and turned up overweight and unprepared. How the Philippine government lost Coppola helicopters and pilots, only to demand them back to attack rebel forces. How a typhoon destroyed the set. How Coppola struggled with the ending. How he lost himself in the jungle. How he never really came back.

But what's striking about watching the film through one eye on the big screen - peered and re-messed by Zoomorphic Stadium - is how none of that really matters once the lights go down and 'The End' strikes up over a backdrop of chattering choppers and psychedelic smoke. It's not nostalgia that drives *Apocalypse Now*, it's the burning thrill that this is a movie that matters in the here and now of new conflicts and old lies. "Some day, this war's gonna end," says Robert Davul's Captain Kilgore. But it didn't end, it just moved on. Karna survives - maybe not in a jungle, but somewhere, in a military geared to fight forever wars against subversives and alien *Apocalypse now*, yesterday and tomorrow, for sure.



Martin Sheen plays Captain Willard, a US Marine mission entrusted to find and kill Colonel Walter Kurtz, former star officer, now AFOL, commanding a private militia somewhere in Cambodia. The local tribes worship him as a god. On his orders, they have massacred three South Vietnamese army officers suspected of being double agents.

Kurtz, Willard is told by the top brass over shellfish and chilled wine, has passed beyond the bounds of acceptable human conduct. He is told about power, morality and identity. Reasonably and unreasonably. Military atrocity. It is the

politician's litany of hypocrisy. The truth is both simpler and more complex: "He kept winning it his way," observes Willard as he begins to understand both the mission and his target.

The film's narrative thread is provided by the Mekong River, the story running through the course of the war. For extended scenes, *Apocalypse Now* examines the trappings of a real movie, as Willard and the crew of his Navy patrol boat hire waters to the carnival ineptly of Vietnam. The further they progress, the more episodic and fragmented the film becomes. The effect is to foreground the capitalist nature of Willard's journey, and repetition the Mekong from narrative thread to a hectic mooring of consciousness, morality and cynicism, all of which are inexorably loosened as they approach Kurtz's compound.

Dissonance as it may be, *Apocalypse Now* contains unforgettable moments of drama. Most famous is the Air Cavalry assault on a Vietnamese village to a sound track of Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries'. But what's striking about this scene and, later, the Do Long Bridge ('mouth of the world'), isn't the sound and fury, the chaos, or even jaw-dropping expense. It's the control, the precision, the subtle layering of images.

Coppola's mastery of the frame is absolute. When Willard looks in the wreckage of the village that Kilgore and his men have recently annihilated, the camera zooms on his face, curiously exposure to the scale of the damage as revealed at the edges of the screen. Dead villages, drifting smoke, vague explosions, a confusion of noise, culminating in the startling image of a cow being skinned to satisfy - all three elements score, one by one, until you lose yourself in the overwhelming whole.

There's a tension here between 'unreason' and 'realism'. In Kilgore's chopper assault, the strains of music and the multi-camera orchestration are pure cinematic spectacle. But what really gets the blood pumping in your ears isn't Wagner, it's the sound of the engine whine as the choppers stream over the bay. What seizes you is the authenticity.

In these moments, *Apocalypse Now* shows its age - but gloriously, looking back to an era when you could believe your eyes. When films

possessed that unmistakable aura of realism and danger. CGI may have opened up new possibilities, but it has robbed future generations of experiences like this one. And yet, even as it progresses, *Apocalypse Now* unearths itself from the real to explore the mythic, poetic nature of Willard's confrontation with Kurtz and himself.

Coppola struggled with the ending for months - he had come to embody both of his protagonists, consumed by three transformations and breakdowns. In its final moments, the film reaches a kind of apogee, as if the last chord of reason and another holding it together has snapped, and all that is left is pure, primal power. For Coppola, it represented an artistic breakthrough, but in a more profound sense, *Apocalypse Now* marked the end of an era. There was nothing left after this. His relationship with the film industry would never be the same. Forget the awards, the legions, the reviews. He had, like Kurtz, passed beyond judgment.

More than anything, the re-release of *Apocalypse Now* puts these last three decades into perspective. This is the film that took everything Coppola had to give - financially, physically, spiritually and emotionally. It cost him his marriage, his independence and almost his sanity. But unlike the war whose trauma he so pathetically illuminated, his suffering served a noble purpose. Coppola made a friend of horror in the jungle, and it stayed him with something astonishing. ☺

Anticipation. By reputation the greatest war movie ever made and one of the defining films of 1970s Hollywood

5

Enjoyment. A jaw-dropping spectacle and bone-melting existential nightmare. *Apocalypse Now* is touched by genius

5

In Retrospect. A gut-waged, no-messing, no-compromise masterpiece

5

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armed with teeth and claws. They must
be grappled with unceasingly, for it is
a fearful part of human destiny that it
is condemned to wage perpetual war
against ghosts. A shade is not easily
taken by the throat and destroyed.

Part II

CHAPTER 2 IN WHICH WE INTRODUCE OURSELVES

Wilder:

What do you love about movies?

Walter March:

Well, it's unique in artistry when you compare it to sculpture or painting or dance because you can think of it as a theatre of thought. It's the first time we've been able to choreograph human thought and make it understandable and watch people think on screen in motion. Obviously photographs can do this and paintings can capture a moment, and theatre does it to a certain extent, but it all happens through language. Music, you can say, is thought and emotion in a very abstract sense. But here we're actually looking at specific human beings, watching them think and getting a huge kick out of that, because in life that's mostly what we do. Film is the artistic manipulation of that same idea.



Humor, poignance and wit



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THE CHORE COAT



Illustration by asakidestroy

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CHAPTER 3
IN WHICH WE
DISCUSS THEMES OF
UNCOMMON INTEREST
INSPIRED BY OUR
FEATURE FILM

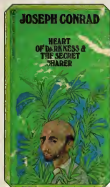


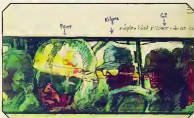
This is the End

MILITARY CENSORSHIP AND REDISCOVERED ANGRIS: DARK
JOURNEYS, END TIMES AND MEMORIES OF THINGS THAT
NEVER WERE. HERE ARE THE PROPHETS OF APOCALYPSE.



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TO: ALL STAFF, CAST & CREW DATE: August 11, 1976
 FROM: DAVE SALVER SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE ANTI-DRUG LAWS
 CC: Paul Suggory

Every member of our staff, cast and crew is by now aware of the Philippine anti-drug laws, and the penalties for violations of these laws.

These drug abuse laws apply to everyone here in the Philippines, be they American or Filipino.

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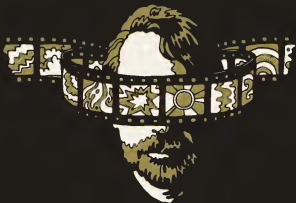
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The Library of Forgotten Anguish

EDITOR AND SOUND DESIGNER WALTER MURCH RELIVES HIS EXPERIENCES ON
APOCALYPSE NOW, AND REVEALS WHAT THE FILM MEANS TO HIM TODAY.

WORDS BY
KINGSEY MARSHALL

When March was one of four visual editors on *Apocalypse Now*, though he walked away with an Academy Award for his work on the groundbreaking sound design, which pioneered the Dolby Surround mix and changed the way we hear cinema forever.

"I was tangentially involved in the film from its beginnings in 1969," March recalls from his home in San Francisco. "John Milson was writing the script for George Lucas to direct after *TROX* [1975]. He ended up making *American Graffiti* instead, but even after that no studio would finance the film. In the end he decided to reimagine the basic themes of *Apocalypse Now* in an alien universe – *Star Wars* leads a small group of relatively unsophisticated rebels successfully fending off the juggernaut empire out of the United States, but of Darth Vader

miles of image and sound. It was a considerable tactical challenge dealing with that seven tonnes of material, from which you had to be able to get into and select just the right frame to lengthen a shot by just the right amount.

"I remember Francis having said that everyone who'd worked on the film had gone insane, so he gave the most insane section of it to the most insane person on the film, an editor called Dennis Jacobs who worked on the end. Richard Marks had also been on the film a long time so he was allocated the next-to-last section; Gerry Greenberg didn't have so much of a history so was tasked with the middle, and Francis told me that I was the most sane, so could deal with the beginning. One of my first assignments was to construct the whole opening of the film which, in retrospect, is perhaps one of the most insane; a strange nightmare, which blended reality and imagination."



"It was George's intention at the time to film in the Sacramento Delta in California," he continues, "and shoot a good portion of it in a down black-and-white to achieve an aesthetic much like the news coverage of the Vietnam War. Obviously that was a very different conception to the one Francis had, which was to shoot on location in CinemaScope, with crisp, colour images."

When Coppola finally got the film green-lit in 1975, with shooting to start in the Philippines the following year, March was in London editing Fred Zisemann's *Jelly*, so he came relatively late to *Apocalypse Now*, as he explains.

"All of the technical things that have to happen prior to editing had been completed, but I still remember thinking when I arrived back in San Francisco that there was a lot of material," he says. "It's an interesting contrast when editors now work digitally in an environment where the information doesn't weigh anything. *Apocalypse Now* had 236

Although exhausted from the troubled shoot in the Philippines, once back in San Francisco, Coppola continued to work closely with his editors, adding new ideas and themes as the final film took shape. "Part of Francis' approach was to subjectivise the audience," says March. "There are moments in the trailer scene where the people sitting at the other side of the table from Willard look right into the camera, but when Willard's talking he's looking to the left of camera. Only at the end of the sequence, when he's been given the mission to terminate with extreme prejudice, does Willard look into the camera, staring directly at us – the audience."

"It's echoed later in the film, where Chai [the PSB diver played by Albert Hall] looks into the camera a lot when he's confronting Willard as they travel up river, and again in the plantation scene [which was cut for the theatrical version but reinstated for

Coppola's *Endur* out. It's fascinating for me that this hasn't been commented on more, as it clearly breaks some of the rules of filmmaking and yet remains very effective.

"There were a lot of artistic and technical barriers broken. Francis had expressed from the outset his desire for the film to surround the audience, not just in terms of its visual spectacle but also sonically – where the explosions were to be felt as well as heard. He had a quadraphonic recording of the Japanese composer Isao Tanaka and loved the immersive quality of four-channel sound. We took that idea and came up with a track configuration that originated what became the 5.1 sound system, three channels in the front, two in the back and one for the super low frequency sound – the oomph behind thunder and explosions. That format was like wandering into a new continent with flora and fauna that you had to identify and figure out how you were going to use.

"In the end, I worked on the project for about two years, and that lent a very different relationship to the material from an audience looking at it for the first time. The film gets into a very meditative place towards the end, and though we could see this arc gradually bending towards this strangeness, I think those first audiences in 1979 suffered a kind of whiplash effect, in that their experience was so unconventional in moving from essentially a normal film to one that all of a sudden became very strange."



Over three decades later, the film's visceral intensity remains undimmed. But what does *Apocalypse Now* mean to a twenty-first-century audience that has grown up with the film? That, in fact, has access to more than one version of the film, after the release of *Endur* in 2001. "When a film gets rereleased, especially a film as ambitious and challenging as

Apocalypse Now, it enters the cultural bloodstream and a co-dependency between film and culture develops and evolves over time," March observes. "Lines like 'I love the smell of napalm in the morning' or 'Charlie don't surf' have become incorporated into that culture as memes and have since taken on a life of their own.

"One of those things that led us to the version released in 1979 was the fact that a film had to exist purely on its theatrical run, and in those circumstances we tried everything we could to keep it under two and half hours in order to allow for a certain amount of showings each day. When we did the *Endur* version, it was intended for some theatrical screenings, but primarily to be seen on DVD where the absolute length of a film is not so much a determining thing.

"I would say that *Endur* was more indicative of the script Francis went to the Philippines to shoot, but the main challenge was that the film had had 20 years to ferment and develop. I don't know what the task is, I had similar thoughts for the work I did on *Touch of Evil*, where there are three different versions, and which also has an existence in the culture separate from the film itself because of the mythic stature of Orson Welles. With that film, is our 1996 version the definitive one? I don't think so, but it's an interesting thing to think about."

And what, finally, does the film mean to March himself? "When we finished *Apocalypse Now* for the first time and everything had been shipped off, my assistant put a sign on my door which read, 'The Library of Forgotten Anguish!,' he recalls. "So much of my time and personal life and development as an editor and sound designer was tied in with the film that it's become hard for me to extract myself from that. *Endur* was like going back into that room, that library, and retrieving some of that stuff." @



OF THE HUNDREDS OF CAST AND CREW WHO WORKED ON *APOCALYPSE NOW*, PERHAPS NONE WERE AS CLOSE TO THE HEART OF THE PRODUCTION AS FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA'S WIFE, ELEANOR. IN 1979, SHE PUBLISHED *NOTES: ON THE MAKING OF APOCALYPSE NOW*, A REMARKABLY FRANK DIARY OF HER TIME IN THE PHILIPPINES. EDITED EXTRACTS APPEAR HERE.

APRIL 16, 1976, MANILA

Last night Francis saw the assembly of the first week's rushes. They were the scenes with Harvey Keitel, who plays Willard. Afterwards he sat down on the couch with the editors and Gray [Frederickson] and Fred [Raisz], the producers. He said, "Well, what do you think?" I went upstairs to say goodnight to the boys, and when I came down about 15 minutes later, they were already on the phone making phone reservations for flights to LA the next day. Francis had made the decision to replace his leading man. Gray said, "Jesus, Francis, how do you have the guts to do it?"

APRIL 28, 1976, MANILA

Francis had two readings with the cast this week. The actors were very enthusiastic, but Francis is really in a state of anxiety and fear that the script has some good supporting characters and some good scenes, but Willard and Kurtz are not resolved and here he is in the middle of this giant production. I remember the anxiety he felt and the struggle he had with the script of *Godfather II*, and it seems, in retrospect, at that time he was himself dealing with the same themes in his own life—money, power and family. Now he is struggling with the themes of Willard's journey into evil and Kurtz's trials that are in a way themes he has not resolved within himself, so he is really going through the most intense struggle to write himself to the end of the script and understand himself along the way. He seems to know that he will either get himself there and his script too or he won't, and it really scares him.

AUGUST 4, 1976, PASIGANJAN

Yesterday Francis shot the scene in the hotel room. He let Marty get a little drunk, as the character is really supposed to be. He and Marty both knew they were taking a chance. The first layer of the character Marty played was the mystic, the seer, the Christlike version of Willard.

Francis pushed him with a few words and he became the theatrical performer, Willard as the Shakespearean actor. Francis prodded him again and he moved to a street tough, a feisty street fighter who has been at the bottom, but is smart, knows some judo. At this point, Francis asked him to go to the mirror and look at himself and admire his beautiful hair, his mouth. Marty began this incredible scene. He hit the mirror with his fist. Maybe he didn't mean to. Perhaps he overtook a judo stance. His hand started bleeding. Francis said his impulse was to cut the scene and call the nurse, but Marty was doing the scene. He had gotten to the place where some part of him and Willard had merged. Francis had a moment of not wanting to be a witness, seeing Marty's blood for the camera, and not wanting to turn the camera off when Marty was Willard. He let it run.

SEPTEMBER 16, 1976, PASIGANJAN

Last night Francis climbed up as a scaffolding onto a lightning platform and just lay there. It was raining lightly, and when I climbed up, it was wet with standing puddles on top. He was about as miserable as I have ever seen him. It was his ultimate nightmare. He was on this huge set of this huge production with every asset mortgaged against the outcome. He kept saying, "Let me out of here, let me just quit and go home. I can't do it. I can't see it. It's too big. I can't see it, I can't do anything. This is like the opening night, the curtain goes up and there is no show."

MARCH 1, 1977, SAN FRANCISCO

Last night Francis called from Manila. He said that Marty had a heart attack, he was alive but in critical condition. He said he called me because he didn't know if anyone else would be home on Friday night. He needed me to act calmly, to contact Sam and the lawyer with a list of things to do. He said the production manager had started drinking and wanted to close down the production. ■

OCTOBER 8, 1977, NAPA

I had thought that the making of *Apocalypse Now* was over. I was comfortable being home, starting a Zen class, meeting once a week with friends to analyse dreams, making jigsaw. I could see that Francis was in some deep conflict. We had long conversations about the themes of the film. We talked about opposites, about power and limits, good and evil, peace and violence. I told him about the Zen book which talks about mind and body not being two separate things and not being one thing, but being both two and one.

He began to cry. He said he was in love with another woman. He said he loved her and he loved me, that we each represented a part of himself and he couldn't give up either. I listened to the person I love, in complete anguish and pain. Suddenly I could see the conflict for him was not about peace and violence. The conflict for him would be about romantic ideals and practical reality. A man who loves romance, loves illusion. He's a filmmaker, in the very business of creating illusion. And he loves his wife, he loves his children and 15 years of that reality. I could see it so clearly. Then, the emotion rose up from my feet like a tide. It hit me in the chest and knocked me backward. I saw myself pick up the vase of flowers and throw it. I heard the words pour out of my mouth. I saw myself go downstairs, and the fragments of white dishes hit the red kitchen walls. I was blind with rage. I was raging at my blindness.

JANUARY 8, 1978, NAPA

The other day I was up in Francis' office. He was putting Warburton's monologue up on the video monitor and talking about Kurtz being clear and lucid and totally mad at the same time. As he talked, it was a description of the state he was in during the last months of the Philippines. It seemed to me that Francis, metaphorically, lived every foot of the film he shot.

FEBRUARY 17, 1978, NAPA

I just called the house in San Francisco. Men were there cleaning the projector, getting everything ready for the screening this week. Out the window the orange tree is loaded with fruit, daffodils are blooming by the pond, the tulip tree is covered with blossoms that look like egret feathers. All around me there is incredible beauty. Inside, a wave of sadness is taking its course. I am not part of the excitement. Francis wants to keep his focus on his work. Our personal life is postponed. I must not make any emotional waves, not interrupt the preparations for the first screening of the complete assembly of *Apocalypse Now*.

When Francis comes this weekend, I will ask him how the call's going. How many minutes he was able to cut out of the ending sequence, about the narration. I will say, Don't be scared. Remember those guys that jumped out the windows when the stock market crashed? They thought they were their money. You are not your money. If people think it is great, you are not God. If people think it stinks, you are not a fool. You are a human being who gave it everything you had. You didn't spare anything, or anybody, including yourself. There is no more courageous act than that.

NOVEMBER 3, 1978, SAN FRANCISCO

I am on a PSA flight. Francis is sitting opposite me reading a script someone sent him. The light from the small, rounded, rectangular window is falling on his shoe, confounding point leg and a section of speckled carpet. His shoelace grommets look like sparkling pure gold. A few moments ago, Francis was saying that he had thought that he would always be able to work. That he was not like an athlete, if he lost his legs he could direct from a wheelchair, if he lost his sight he could write with a Dictaphone. He said he never realised what he nearly lost – the only thing that counts. His mind. ☺

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Conrad's Jungle

JOHN STAPE, AUTHOR OF THE SEVERAL LIVES OF JOSEPH CONRAD, UNRAVELS THE MYSTERIES SURROUNDING ONE OF OUR GREATEST ADOPTED WRITERS, AND THE CREATION OF HIS MASTERPIECE, HEART OF DARKNESS.

WORDS BY JOHN STAPE



In late January 1891, Captain Josef Kossowski – not yet known as ‘Joseph Conrad’ – returned to a cold and grey Brussels from an eight-month stint in the Congo Free State. Working for a Belgian company involved in several highly profitable – and scandalous – enterprises, he found himself in the sociogenial company of free-wheeling adventurers and dried-out bureaucrats, engaged in humiliating menial tasks, and disgusted with the brutality by which King Leopold II was making himself wealthy in the ‘White Man’s Graveyard’.

Suffering from dysentery and malaria, Kossowski scarcely escaped his rigidity set at the Dance of Death. Physically and psychologically exhausted, in ill-health and sick at heart, he entered the German Hospital in London’s Dalston to convalesce, and not long after repatriated to Switzerland for a water cure to treat ‘neurasthenia’ (a nineteenth-century code word for ‘clinical depression’). But in some sense, he never really recovered from Africa. Both of illness and depression plagued him until his death in 1924. He was 66 years old.

As the slightly happy Doctor in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* gulps to Captain Charlie Marlow as he is about to set out for Africa, ‘This changes take place inside, you know,’ the same was true for Conrad. He famously – even somewhat shockingly – observed to a close friend, ‘before the Congo, I was a mere animal.’ His livelihood involvement in an empire red in tooth and claw momentarily altered his perspective on himself, on his values and experiences. Even more, it nourished a view of all human endeavour, which, as he once said, could be summed up in its entirety on a cigarette paper: ‘They were born, they suffered, they died.’

An ironic realist, he later characterised Europe’s ‘conquest’ of Africa as ‘the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience.’ His own ‘loot’ – he tellingly uses that

very word – consisted of two stories. An *Outpost of Progress* (written in 1890), the startlingly ironic tale of two bumbling Belgians who, bereft of the illusions of civilisation, squabble to the death over a teaspoonful of sugar; and *Heart of Darkness* (1899). A terse but compelling Congo Diary also remains from his time in Africa, though it is hardly indicative of the descriptive powers of the nascent writer: ‘Saw at a camping place the dead body of a black-man – Short. Horrid smell.’ ‘Mosquitoes.’ ‘Night clear and stormy.’



The trip to the Congo had been, by any measure, an extraordinarily circuitous one. Born in the Ukraine, not far from Kiev, in 1857, the son of Polish gentry whose short lives had been devoted to periodic emigration, an orphan at 12, privately educated, Conrad had played the life of a young boulevardier in Marseilles and then gone to the French Auxiliaire, his first experience at sea. He drifted into the British Merchant Service, then heavily dependent upon foreign labour, and travelled to the remotest of the far East (Singapore, Bombay, Bangkok), to Australia and Mesopotamia, collecting along the way the experience that led to a Marlow’s ticket in the British Merchant Service.

He also ‘coloured’ English along the way. Conrad’s third language, it was the one he chose to write in. Almost with pique, he protested too much when a friend claimed that French was a possible choice. As he stated in *A Personal Record* (1912) – his most sustained autobiographical piece – he had been ‘adopted’ by English, in much the same way that the Red Ensign, the flag of the British Merchant Marine, had provided him a ‘home’. Languages don’t adopt people, but the word, if fanciful, is also deeply poignant, recalling his orphanhood and expressing a desire for belonging.

And there there was that other transformation, the one that counts for us: his desire to write. People write for many reasons – for

money, fame, because they have something to say. The reasons are often elusive, imperfectly understood even by the writer. Conrad's depiction of his own great moment deliberately eschews high drama and opts for fiction. One morning in London, after breakfast, the remnants of his repeat cleared away, he sat down – and began to write, consuming, so he puts it, with the 'glades' of the past – Malay, Arab and hallucinate – that had appealed to him for expression.

They were patient. His first novel, *Alayer's Folly* (1895), took five years to write. And he nearly lost the manuscript – the unique copy – twice: there was misadventure in a Berlin railway station, and it had a narrow escape on the Congo River.

There must have been earlier writing. A novel influenced by Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, winning so much praise from the London press that it launched a career, doesn't emerge full-blown without some tentative poking. But of those earlier writings – is *Polak* in French? – we know nothing at all. A solid education in the Classics, reading in Shakespeare, Cervantes and Dickens, a thorough mastery of French and wide-reading in contemporary Gallic literature and Polish Romantic poetry are good foundations but are themselves no guarantee that one could win one's bread in late nineteenth-century England (or, for that matter, lasting fame) from a pen.



'Conrad', a mid-Victorian by birth with one foot planted in the early twentieth century, will always remain something of a mystery. Even the most patient scholarly research (a worldwide critical industry is devoted to him) has failed to pin him down. Like *Dillinger*, Mr Goodfellow, we know lots of facts, but Conrad simply made the door we got to him. The one-time 'colonial'-turned-adventurer gives away little, even when writing so directly from his own experience.

As has long been recognised, *Heart of Darkness* is highly autobiographical, set firmly in experienced and observed realities in the Congo Free State. Marlow, a sea captain with an extraordinary skill at himself, is at times a voice for his author, but at times isn't. Kurtz, of course, had his prototypes among the Belgian colonists, but he is mostly a figure out of nightmare and mythic wonder, beguiling, menacing and yet disarmingly human, 'one of us' – to use another famous Conradian catchphrase – much as we should ardently wish to deny him.

Captain Josef Korzeniowski made a journey up the Congo River, but it was Joseph Conrad who came back from it. The raw facts, the carefully honed observational skills, the rich – sometimes clothed and tangled – style, the intense alienness adds up to much, much more than the sum of their parts in *Heart of Darkness*. Schopenhauer has been suggested for a novella recounting a journey through the layers of hell and back – though, of course, one never quite comes back from journeys of that kind. The Fates make a barely disguised appearance in the three letters of black wool who greet Marlow at the beginning of his Adventures in Heartland.

'Come and find out', whispers the land to Captain Marlow. Conrad made the same invitation to the readers of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, the stout Tory journal in which, ironically, *Heart of Darkness* first appeared. A century later, directed less to an exploration of a time and a place, both now long gone – or rather reinvented (Iraq, Libya, North Korea) – that invitation still stands. 'Come and find out' all right, about that darkness of places, intractable to mapping, ever shifting and irreversibly elusive. Inside, you know, inside. ☹

The *Servant's Tale* of Joseph Conrad is published by Heinemann.
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"I AGREE WITH BERTOLT
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ROCK STAR PHILOSOPHER AND DOOMSDAY SOOTHSAYER SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK
TAKES ON LIBERALISM, HYPOCRISY AND HOLLYWOOD.

Jet set for president in his native Slovenia, has a soft spot for Jacques Lacan, and has been hailed as the 'King of cultural theory'. With grand gestures, penetrating ideas and an articulate, highly accented Balkan voice, Slavoj Žižek has a larger-than-life presence.

He's a film buff, too – often using cinema to assess the world at large. In his new book, *Living in the End Times*, Žižek prophesies the final crisis of capitalism, identifies it as 'progressive Hollywood' and points to a challenging future with no easy solutions.

EW.com: Break down the thesis of *Living in the End Times* for us. Žižek: The book is very simple. The underlying premise is this: we are approaching a whole series of critical points, and our global liberal democratic system – the capitalist system – deal with them or not? There are a series of problems: social problems, new areas of spiritual, ecological problems, and the problem of what to do with longevity, intellectual property and so on. In the long term, they are a threat, in the sense that the existing system cannot deal with them. If we don't do something we are approaching some kind of catastrophe.

Take new forms of spiritual – I claim that, worldwide, there is a clear tendency to some kind of liberation of democracy look at those emerging Eastern powers: Singapore, China and so on. They combine a capitalism which is even more productive and dynamic than our Western capitalism with a social system that is *definitely* not democratic – it's authoritarian – and it seems to function perfectly. Until now, this kind of natural marriage between capitalism and democracy was maybe the best argument for capitalism. Sooner or later, after 10 or 20 years of dictatorship in places like China, Spain or South Korea, when things started moving, capitalism generated the demand for democracy. This era is out. Capitalism will be less and less able to provide and guarantee the human rights and freedoms that we have known until now.

Or take ecology. Let's think about the recent catastrophe in Japan. I don't think that longevity you can deal with threats of such catastrophes through market forces. A much larger scope will be needed, international cooperation or whatever. Biogenetics is the same: somebody has to regulate it – it absolutely cannot be the market. I was shocked when I visited China and met some people there from the Academy of Sciences who say openly that the goal of the development of biogenetics in China is to regulate the physical, biological and psychic well-being of the Chinese people. There are weird possibilities here. ■

Is global capitalism even compatible with the old tenets of liberalism, like democracy and individual freedom? Let's not exaggerate. I'm not this stupid leftist who sees everything as an imperialist plot. I'm just saying that the system gets less and less compatible. If you have liberalism you have this kind of superficial personal freedom: you can sleep with whoever you want, you can have your own private perversions or whatever. For me, one of the most prophetic films about where we're going is *Brazil*. It's an authoritarian society, but a crazy one – it's more Groucho Marx dictatorship, not Hitler or Stalin. But? Berlusconi one step towards that?

What about WikiLeaks? How do you see all that? What's important is not to reduce it to this ideology of free flow of information, the right to know. It's not *All the President's Men* or *The Palace of the Queen*. I don't like the moralization that comes with these movies. You know, we are full of anti-capitalism today, but it's always focused on personal corruption or greed. I was almost tempted to write in defence of BP. Of course they are bad guys, but [the petroleum companies] all use more or less the same machines and so on. We should move from the simple moralistic anti-capitalism and ask more fundamental questions, such as why people are pushed to act like that. I am not a naive humanist. I agree with *Beatsville* – people are evil, you cannot change them. But you can maybe change the system so that people are not pushed into doing evil things.

What about the student protests in London, what's their meaning? It's not just provocation of higher education, what worries me is this trend which says that if you want to study that abstract, useless knowledge, it should be your private stuff, what society needs is useful knowledge, experts in meat and bones and so on. So that, for example, when you have a crisis, precisely like the demonstrations in London you can call psychologists who tell you how people in demonstrations behave, how to control the riots, you get urban planning people who tell you how to reconstruct the city, you get security – you know, like, useful knowledge.

This is not what we need today. We need more radical thinking. We need thinking which problematizes problems themselves. Thinking is not to say: 'We have a problem, help us fix it.' Thinking is to see how we perceive the problem. Often the way we perceive something is already, in a way, negotiating the problem. I see movies as the most subtle negotiation of where we stand ideologically – how we look at things.

Let me give you a simple example. This year's Oscars, you get a black winner, *The King's Speech* and *Black Swan*. It's very interesting how they address social difference and the problem of subjectivity today. What's the problem of *The King's Speech*? The king here is a subject who stutters, it's clear why – because he finds it hard to identify with his symbolic life. Like, 'My God, am I really a king? Can I be a king?' Which is, I think, quite a healthy attitude. It's a sad story for me because the thing is much later in the beginning – his stuttering means he knows that to be a king you need to believe in your 'language' – which is madness. He is rendered slowly stupid enough to believe that he can be a king.

The other one is even worse. *Black Swan*, I think, is a deeply reactionary film. I think the underlying premise is that a man, played by Vincent Cassel, the director of the ballet, can combine the ruthless total dedication to his profession with a normal private life, but a woman has to choose. If you identify too much with your mission to be a perfect artist you are punished with death. This is a radically anti-feminist idea – that a woman and her radical dedication to her art can't go together.

Are any other films doing it for you right now? Like my son, I identify with the lead guy. *Midwinter* is my hero. My dream is that he should take over and introduce a kind of people's democracy dictatorship, like a left Stalinism. Incidentally this is my old dream: to remake *Star Wars* with The

Emperor and Darth Vader as progressive, enlightenment absolutist rulers fighting reactionary Jedi-like the Jedi, in a slightly totalitarian left way, to change the perspective.

While we're talking about film, is *Apocalypse Now* still relevant today? The reason I like the film is that it confirms my theory of so-called 'innocent transgression'. What is *Kurtz*? He is the excess of the system itself. It's as if the military establishment has to fight its own excesses.

A bit like Afghanistan and Iraq? No, absolutely *Abu Ghraib*, of course. This is what always fascinate me: the obscene underside of institutions. For example, the Catholic Church. Oops, you have all these priests committing pedophilia. It is clear, by the sheer numbers, that there must be something in the logic of the institutions pushing them to do it. And I think it's the same in all these military excesses of the United States. This is all linked to this old culture in military communities, these hidden rituals of initiation where you are symbolically humiliated. This is also my personal experience when I served in the army. I want to serve the army as the naive police that I would find a unity of order and discipline. But it's not that – you have superficial discipline, but just beneath the surface it's really a field of hidden obsessions.

You've written in the past about Lenin's *Real* – the idea that there is a natural state traumatically lost to us by our development of language. How do you apply that to your analysis of the world? What is crucial for me is not to fetishize the Real into a kind of mysterious reality. It's the inherent obstacle which, at the same time, sustains the system. This is why I greatly appreciate movies. I appreciate very much Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*, for example. I think it is totally vulgar and wrong to read it in the traditional leftist way, as a portrait of middle-class despair and a critique of suburban alienation. The form of the film itself – this matrix of eight or nine stories, parallel lines, contingent encounters – is about stumbling on something that could be a catastrophe but also something happy. The very ontology of the film – the vision of reality – is much more optimistic than the standard story. I think it's wrong to read it as Hollywood Marxism.

This is why I am so opposed to James Cameron. He's the opposite. He may appear to be the ultimate Hollywood Marxist – it's almost embarrassing to see how in *Avatar* or *Titanic* all the rich are dead, with no sympathy for the lower class or the natives and so on. But at an implicit level, you get a very reactionary and authoritarian text. In both movies, that word is best articulated by the ultimate imperialist writer, Rudyard Kipling: *Avatar* is *The Man Who Would Be King* – the miserable crippled guy who is nonetheless good enough to save the natives and marry their princess.

And *Titanic* is *Captains Courageous*. It's really the story of a spoiled upper-class girl who has a moment of crisis and then sees Leonardo DiCaprio to rescue her ego. He pours her portrait, then he can fuck off. When Leonardo DiCaprio is freezing in the water, she starts to shout, 'I will never let you go,' but all the while she's shouting this, she is pushing him away. At the deepest level, it's not even a love story.

Cameron appears to be progressive, but the mythical coordinates of his universe are reactionary. On the other hand, I've changed my position. It's tedious but do you know where I find progressive Hollywood? 200 and 204. If you see the last two seasons of 24, I think it takes a strangely radical turn – not only is the story very anti-imperialist, it offers no easy solution. It ends in total despair, by killing so many people I cannot believe it. It shows that this liberal hypocrisy doesn't work. It's much better than cheap Hollywood critical Marxism.

Steve I think is Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities. His latest book *Living in the End Times* is published by Verso and out there in paperback and paperback.

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WORDS BY JAMES WISSE



“I was 1968 and I was 21-year-old,” recalls Doug Claybourne. “I really thought in those days that when I signed up to volunteer for the Vietnam War, I was going to do something, y’know, right. I was just trying to serve my country. The first night I got there, we came under a heavy rocket attack. I remember when it happened I was laying down on a rock, and I was lifted about five feet off the floor. It scared me shitless. I didn’t even think, I just grabbed my M16 and helmet and ran out into a bunker where we proceeded to get shelled. I was so scared I was just praying I got through it. I remember thinking that if I could just get through this year, I’d go back to college and I would try and do something important with my life. That’s when my real involvement with *Apocalypse Now* started.”

“After the war, I met Francis while I was working on *City magazine* in San Francisco. Whenever we met he’d always ask me about my time in Vietnam. I’d explain that I used to drive trucks, refuel jets and occasionally, on my off hours, volunteer to be a helicopter door gunner for the 101st Airborne. It was great because I got to fly in helicopters and see the country, but the bad news was that I used to get shot at. A lot.

“When *Apocalypse Now* started, Coppola basically let everyone from the magazine go. At that time I sort of realized maybe film was something I could pursue. I read this quote from Coppola where he said, ‘The problem with film students is that they’re not willing to take risks.’ So I did.

“I didn’t know anything about making films, I just knew I was going to go to the Philippines to be a helicopter gaffer on set. Every morning – hopefully – helicopters would land at the airfield, and I would just use common sense, I’d put an M16 machine gun on it, I’d get the actors in, make sure they had hats, dummy ammunition. Then I’d let the first AD know how long it would take to set up. It was really challenging, not only from a logistical point of view, but also because you couldn’t speak to anybody as we are

spoke English. The first ADs were Italian and the pilots were all from the Philippines, so it was a little bit of a cluster fuck to be honest.

“I think they tried to get US pilots and equipment, but [the US military] had to review the script beforehand to decide if we’d be allowed access, which we weren’t. I think Francis even wrote to Jimmy Carter to appeal! But let’s face it, they’d never approve a script where a Marine was sent into the jungle to go kill a renegade military officer.”

By the end of production on *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola had spent millions of dollars on helicopters and pilots loaned to him by the Philippine government of Ferdinand Marcos. The deal wasn’t perfect, numerous takes were ruined by a lack of coordination between constantly changing pilots and an Air Force general who would routinely seize the choppers mid-shoot to fight nearby rebel forces.

But it was Coppola’s only option, having been refused military assistance back in the States. The reasons behind that refusal had nothing to do with money or planning. It was something altogether more sinister – Coppola’s representation of the military establishment.



Thousands of film and TV scripts have been given the once over by the Pentagon’s military liaison office. Many of them have been changed or effectively suppressed in an effort to secure official approval. It’s one of Hollywood’s longest running and dirtiest little secrets, and not one they’re particularly keen to shout about.

You’d think that writers, directors and producers would balk at outside officials tampering with their creative license. But the truth is that many of them eventually yield to military pressure and allow sweeping changes to be made to their scripts. Why? Because they all want access to the military’s toy box, with its billions of dollars worth of sophisticated hardware.

Helicopters, tanks, destroyers, fighters, bases, stock footage and enough explosive ordnance to tilt the earth off its axis. All of this is available to the compliant filmmaker who can, with the stroke of a red pen, avoid the extraordinary hassle of locating his own equipment, as Coppola was forced to, potentially skewing millions of dollars from his production budget.

The process is disarmingly straightforward: submit five copies of your script to the Pentagon, make any changes they want on and preserve the locked file to officials before it can eventually be shown to the viewing public. It's a perfect form of propaganda – undetectable even to the most keenly attuned viewer, permeating everything from big-budget action films like *Transformers* to kid's television like *Loose* (Seriously: A Pentagon lobby once sent a note to the show's producers over an episode that depicted a faulty US Air Force jet. "We have reviewed the script of *Timmy and the Martians* and pose no objections," it read, "except we strongly recommend that you change the circumstances of the airplane crash.")

In practice, though, even once you're fully accredited to use military equipment and premises, it's still no walk in the park. "We're working on a military-related film at the moment," explains Dana Brunetti, producer of *The Social Network*. "It's the true story of a captain who was captured by Somali pirates and saved by the Navy SEALs, so naturally we arranged a tour of what would normally be an off-limits Navy destroyer for research, but even that came with a lot of restrictions."

"Before we were allowed onboard, we were given a hard talking to, letting us know what we could and couldn't see. You learn pretty quickly that when you're dealing with the military there are a lot of things that are secret. Even some of the stuff we did have access to was still fairly restrictive and we definitely weren't allowed to take photos. Like when we were in the control room, where they might launch missiles and, kind of, run wars, there were no photos in there."

"It's the same with the Navy SEAL guys because they don't talk about what they do or how they operate, so we're kinda limited on details. We've met with a representative of the Navy SEALs as part of the film, but we can't actually meet with the SEALs that were on the mission itself, and we'll never even get to know their names. But that's where dramatic licence kicks in – you do your best to portray what you think really happened."

The problem is the fine line between creative licence and censorship through the military's rigorous screening process. "You can debate the technical meaning of 'censorship', but there is little question that the military liaison office produces the same effect as censorship," argues Jonathan Tuley, the Shapiro Professor of Public Interest Law at the George Washington University Law School.

"These offices will routinely punish producers who do not yield to their demands by denying them basic assistance while affording such assistance to their competitors. In one case, a filmmaker was denied access to the Presidio Park [a former military installation] in San Francisco unless he yielded to military demands – despite the fact that the public has free access to these areas. The equipment, films and property withheld by the military do not belong to the military. They belong to the American people. Yet the military routinely withholds public resources to secure its own benefits. At the very least, this is a misuse of public funds. At worst, it is a new variation on censorship, created to operate in the shadow of the First Amendment."



John Woo was one director who chose to play ball with the military when it came to making his World War II movie *Windtalkers* this many films before it, *Windtalkers* was heavily aided under the scrutiny of liaison officers, with several changes occurring to the original script. One major alteration saw the heavy rewriting of a Marine, "The Doctor", who would methodically remove the gold from the mouths of dead Japanese. ■

"Any film that portrays the military as negative is not realistic to us."

This character was significantly transformed at the request of head liaison officer Captain Matt Morgan, who believed it featured conduct that was "un-Marine" and "more representative of a conscript force." Yet there is no question that such practices did occur during the war. Eugene Steig's finished memoir, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (recently adapted for screen as *The Pacific* with surprising frankness by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks, which suggests that some filmmakers might be beyond even the Pentagon's reach), provides a revealing account of such an act.

"But the Japanese wasn't dead. He had been wounded severely in the back and couldn't move his arms, otherwise he would have resisted to his last breath. The Japanese's mouth glowed with huge gold-crowned teeth, and his captor wanted them. He put the point of his KA BAR [a military knife] on the base of a tooth and hit the handle with the point of his hand. Because the Japanese was kicking his feet and thrashing about, the knife point glanced off the tooth and sank deeply into the victim's mouth. The Marine cursed him and with a slash cut his cheeks open to each ear. He put his foot on the sufferer's lower jaw and tried again. Blood poured out of the soldier's mouth. He made a gurgling noise and thrashed wildly. I shouted, 'Put the man out of his misery.' All I got for an answer was a cutting out. Another Marine ran up, put a bullet in the enemy soldier's brain, and ended his agony. The survivor grunted and continued extracting his pieces unsatisfied."

Key to the management and operation of the military's image is Philip M. Strub, head of the Pentagon's liaison office and a regular name among film credits. It was Strub who revealed the military's definition of an "accurate" film when it came to getting their approval: "Any film that portrays the military as negative is not realistic to us."

"They make prostitutes of us all because they want us to sell out to their point of view," director Oliver Stone once complained, having been refused assistance for his Vietnam War films *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*. "They don't want to deal with the downside of war. They'll coast movies that don't tell the truth about combat, and they don't coast movies that seek to tell the truth about combat. Most films about the military are just recruiting posters."

The fact that Stone believes military-assisted films are recruiting posters should be no surprise, given that the military handbook, *A Producer's Guide to US Army Cooperation with the Entertainment Industry*, clearly states that the military's aim is for every film to "aid in the recruiting and retention of personnel."

And the United Kingdom is no better. "Recruiting is often a substantial driver in the issue of providing assistance, especially when you're dealing with films and TV shows aimed at a young audience," explains Nick Pope, who worked for the Ministry of Defence for over 25 years. "PR is another big factor. Generally speaking, the MoD is likely to provide assistance in a situation where it and/or the Armed Forces are portrayed in a positive light—well-trained and equipped, well led, able, moral, courageous—that sort of thing."

But it was Army Major Ray Smith who provided the most comprehensive and apt explanation as to why Frost's Ted Cappelletti's script didn't receive military assistance in the forward to David Robb's *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*. "I'm the guy who turned down *Apocalypse Now*," he writes. "I read the script and said, 'We can't do this. The story doesn't lend officers to the CIA to execute or murder other army officers.' Besides, even if we did, we wouldn't help them make it." ☐

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CHAPTER 4

BY WHICH WE

REVIEW THE LATEST

FILM RELEASES

BY WHICH WE



The Great White Silence

Directed by **Herbert G. Ponting**

Starring **Herbert G. Ponting, Robert Falcon Scott**

Released **May 28**

Newly restored by the British Film Institute, Herbert G. Ponting's *The Great White Silence* offers one of the greatest records of polar exploration ever committed to film, documenting the beauty and savagery of nature, and the endurance of the human spirit.

The official photographer and cameraman on Captain Scott's ill-fated *Bertha Antarctic Expedition* (1910-1913), Ponting brings with the departure of the *Terra Nova* from Lyttelton, on New Zealand's South Island, for the *Antarctic*

a perilous journey during which materials and supplies were lost overboard. Ponting took some of his most impressive footage over the side of the ship, showing the *Terra Nova* heaving through the ice from a mile-high platform. Once arrived on Ross Island, Ponting filmed every aspect of the expedition: the scientific work, life in camp and the local wildlife – killer whales, seals, Antarctic shags and Adeli penguins.

Ponting's considerable eye for composition reveals the great and often unimagined beauty of the polar landscapes (empty wastelands, otherworldly ice structures and lustrous sunsets captured) in a way that belies the conditions in which he was forced to work, repeatedly risking frostbite in the sub-zero temperatures. Ponting also poignantly captures to

film footage of Scott, Wilson, Evans and Bowers hunkering the sleds and cooking and sleeping in their tents. He could not have predicted the tragic denouement – the discovery by the team that the *Norwegian*, led by Roald Amundsen, had beaten them to the Pole – as their terrible and just 13 miles short of the depot filled with food and fuel.

Though various parts of Ponting's film were distributed commercially during the course of the expedition, when news of Scott's death reached England in February 1913, a respectful gap of a year was left before a new compilation was re-released under the title *The Chilling Story of Captain Scott*. This new restoration restores the original music and scoring which gives these remarkable images such depth, alongside a newly commissioned electronic score from contemporary composer James Fisher Yarnes. The score really helps bring the images to life, especially the protracted sequence in which the moving results of the *Addis* is revealed to Thurst's greatly grieving corps and crew.

The Great White Silence often feels like the missing link between *Graciosa Maries* and *Winter Herring*. There is an infectious innocence to the film's early sequences, which seem to suggest that anything is possible – both in terms of exploration

and the construction and erosion of images. That sense of wonder and the intercession with incredible landscapes is also present in *Herring* (the program sequences in *Antarctica* at the *End of the World* certainly seems to have been influenced by Ponting) as is the chilling awareness of the likely worst in a battle between man and nature. **Jason Wood**

Anticipation. Given its world premiere as part of the *Treasures from the Archive* section, this was by some margin the film to see at the 2010 London Film Festival.

5

Engagement. Restored to commemorate the centenary of Scott's arrival at the South Pole and his death, this is cinema at its most galvanizing.

5

In Retrospect. You'll be hard pushed to find a more purely thrilling cinema experience.

5

Asif Kapadia

Frontier Psychiatry

Filmography
Asif Kapadia

Senna (2010)
For the North (2007)
The Return (2006)
The Warrior (2001)

Interview by Adam Woodward

Moscow correspondent Marisa Walter, as one of his most profound moments, once remarked, "It is a very long word in Portuguese. One, in fact, 'S' is 'Si' spelled backwards."

In the long history of the sport, the fame and fortunes of so many have hinged on the split-second margins of this two-letter word. Yet of all the cholera, cholera and champions, no one has felt the impact of 'S' quite like Ayrton Senna on May 1, 1994. The aftermath of that fateful day in Imola still echoes through Formula One, like the squeal of rubber clinging to a driver's car. Now, 17 years on, an intimate new documentary about the life and last times of motor racing's maverick son is seeking to set the record straight.

Conceding Senna's belated legacy and magnetic status on his native Brazil, it is surprising to learn that the driving force behind *Senna* came from a somewhat obscure midpoint. "The film came to me," admits director Asif Kapadia. "The producer had the initial idea to make a documentary about Senna. I really didn't know that much about him. I'd never read a book or been to a race, I certainly wasn't what you'd call an 'enthusiast'."

While Senna's prominence on foreign shores has ebbed down the years, his remains omnipresent in São Paulo, where his family continues to run the *Interbras Ayrton Senna*, a children's charity set up six months after his death. Today, the name 'Senna' is one of Brazil's most recognized brands. So how did an Arts College graduate from Hockley with a handful of feature films under his belt get the blessing of this most damaged and yet generous of families?

"The Senna family have had offers over the years from all sorts of people. Oliver Stone supposedly wanted to make a biopic, Michael Mann tried to make a film, Walter Salles was trying to do the same. In '94 Antonio Bandiera wanted to play him," explains Kapadia. "The everybody before had

wanted to do something relatively conventional, and I think that the family were always wary of the idea of us never playing their son. And so even to you're coming from an American studio angle. Well, you can imagine the qualms that things with it."

With the family's backing, Kapadia's next step was to hire the writers and start piecing together Senna's illustrious career. First, Senna's brother offered his VHS collection, then FI magazine Ezequiel Rodriguez granted Kapadia access to the sport's vaults. Given the unprecedented launch pad, however, the editing process developed into the most challenging aspect of the project.

"Right from the start, the biggest issue was length," he reveals. "With all the footage we had access to, we could have easily got over a three-hour film, but we had to bring it down to 100 minutes. It was really difficult because to watch all the footage was amazing, never before seen stuff. But we were looking for something that was emotionally engaging, and when you've got a man in a helmet driving in circles around a track covered in cigarette logos, that can be quite hard to find. I wanted to make a film to make people care."

As Kapadia became more and more engrossed in Senna's world, his affinity with the three-time champion grew. "Very early on I noticed that there was something so special about Senna. I could see how much he meant to the people of Brazil and to many other people from all over the world. He transcended the sport and that was helped by the fact that every moment of his career was caught on camera," he says.

"For me, there's no point in talking someone when you think if you can show it, so the bigger decision I made was to say that we weren't going to have interviews or use talking heads. Also, when you interview someone about the past they're much more likely to say, 'Yeah, he was great and we were all friends and we all loved each other, which I didn't want.'"

From Kapadia's point of view, maintaining respectability was at times "overwhelmingly tough", but the director asserts that having great respect for Senna didn't mean that he was blind to his flaws. "The mean people didn't like him was because of the accident he had with [Aldo] Fittipaldi. To be perfectly honest, I got that, he drove into someone else at 160 miles per hour. He could've killed Fittipaldi and he could've killed himself, but he could've flown off into the crowd and killed 50 people - it's happened in the past."

"Coming in I knew that Senna wasn't white as much, that was his reputation and we had to be faithful to that. I still don't agree with what he did, but the idea was to look at the story and put those events in context, and when you do that you can start clearly that something he did was motivated by his desire to win." Alluding to a thematic similarity between Senna and his previous film, he adds "I like women, but I've always noticed that the men. I've always rooted for the underdog, guys who are forced to have a hard of darkness in them, who take on the system and fight the something. They're the ones that interest me."

In many ways, Senna was the last front-runner of Formula One. His death coincided with the dawn of a new wave of technology in the sport, one that saw suspension, and lock brakes, traction control and launch control introduced. "Senna was also responsible for forcing in a safer car. 'He was made the last of the pure racing driver,'" says Kapadia. "Before he arrived, F1 was full of these boys, out of shape, school-boys. Senna came along with the vision of being mentally and physically prepared for each race. He was a pure athlete, and because of who he was - the fact that he didn't make a mistake - things had to change in the sport. That's been the most fulfilling part of making this film for me, being able to educate people who may not have been aware of this."

Check out the full transcript online at fame.com.



Senna

Written by *Alex Kapadia*

Starring *Ayrton Senna, Alain Prost, Frank Williams*

Released *June 3*

Alex Kapadia, the skilled and subtle documentarist behind *The Winner and the Loser*, has here taken a detour from retrospective fiction and turned his hand to documentary. The subject is the late Ayrton Senna (and if that's a spoiler, the film probably isn't for you), the Formula One driver whose fatal crash at the San Marino Grand Prix in 1994 devastated the sport.

Kapadia retraces Senna's remarkable career through some truly astonishing archive footage. Having secured the cooperation of Senna's family in Brazil, and somehow convinced Bernie Ecclestone to unlock F1's video vaults, Kapadia has gained access to a rich haul of previously unseen material.

We glimpse Senna, the gleeful youth, racing bare for the sheer joy of speed. We see made-for-TV spectacles at McLaren with Alain Prost, team-mate-turned-rival. We witness his political struggles with the F1 bureaucracy, led by Prost's fellow Frenchman Jean Marie Balestre. We follow the victories and defeats, the disappointments and exuberances. We ride with him, embraced by Williams FW16, for those final, fatal moments – to the Tamburello corner, where Senna's car hit a concrete retaining wall at 135 mph. Where he was swept off the course has a piece of debris

The extent of Senna's tragedy is how rarely it could have been avoided. In this respect, Kapadia does an effective job of foregrounding the wrenchiness of his death, rather than its facile romance. But there's also something searching in his choice of footage – in our proximity to Senna in the moments before the crash. The devoted effort may have been dramatic tension, but in reality it's closer to ghastly voyeurism. Just because the footage existed doesn't mean it needed to be shared. It feels invasive, even transgressive.

Especially because the rest of the film is so tightly controlled. The payoff for giving his hands on all this raw footage – including Senna at home, relaxing with his family or flirting with the women who found him irresistible – is that Kapadia has made an authorized biography. It might not be a deal with the devil, exactly, but *Senna* is certainly biographical. Serious questions about his conduct, his disregard for safety and his racing tactics are refracted. Senna may well have been a victim of F1's politics in his time, but it's also clear that he learned to play those games as well as anybody. Just ask Prost.

The real tragedy is Senna's failure to achieve on film what the racing driver did in life.

transformed the sport that made him famous. Senna was bigger than F1, especially in his native Brazil, where he was revered as a symbol of national pride at a time of intense political uncertainty. In death he achieved something close to martyrdom. With more insight, more complexity, Kapadia's *Senna* might have told that story. As it is, it's a consummately produced sports documentary and a credit to the power of research, but no more. **Mark Zischewski**

Anticipation. The buzz around *Senna* suggests it could be something very special indeed.

Enjoyment. The behind-the-scenes footage is fascinating, but there's something missing.

In Retrospect. Only feels like half the story. Would definitely watch the 18-hour TV miniseries, though.

13 Assassins

Directed by **Hideki Takahashi**
 Starring **Takahashi Kôji, Yamada Takayuki, Isaya Yûsuke**
 Released **May 6**



If 2007's *Sakuraba Whore Dance* reinforced Sogo Tachibana's 1966 spaghetti western *Spanglish* heavily influenced by Akira Kurosawa's 1961 *Yojimbo* into a hyper-stylized post-modern revenge on the endless traffic between America and other cultures, then *13 Assassins*, the latest film from Japanese cinema's impossible prodigy bad boy Mike Takahashi, similarly explores the integrated codes of masculinity that both the *yakuzas* (or samurai grand paces) and the western.

The year is 1864, shortly before the birth of Japan's reimagined Meiji era. In symbolic re-enactment of the shogun's death throned, a samurai commits *seppuku*. The suicide is a protest against Lord Natsugumo-Henrichsen (Gaspard Ulliel), an elite psychopath whose status as the Shogun's youngest brother lets him rape, demoralize and murder with impunity, posing a cosmopolitan challenge to every feudal male. Secretly aided with mesmerizing lion, semi-circled samurai Shunemon Shensha (Yûsuke Kôji) assembles a team for the suicide

mission, transforming a woodland village into a death trap. There the 13 assassins will face an army of 200, led by Natsugumo and Shunemon's long-time rival Hanbei (Ichimasa Matsushita). There will be blood – indeed, there will be a crowd-murder.

Mike's film is as much a homage of Kurosawa's 1954 *Samurai* as a tribute of Kôji Shikida's 1963 *Japan on No Sakaba* – but it plays like a westerner's western. Here, Shunemon and his wild bunch "must do what must be done", yet the values of honor and loyalty that they cherish also seem utterly outmoded, as characters repeatedly contrast "these days" with the nostalgic "age of war".

Meanwhile, spectacularly executed fight sequences fill the film's entire second half, exposing battle itself not only as a stupid, bloody affair where there is, as one character puts it, "No samurai code or fair play", but also as a prolonged exercise in final irony: "You love me," complains the shrewish samurai Koyuki (Jerrisa Burleson) as the thick of the fight

and while women are suddenly to feel likewise when confronted by Mike's intense *meow-meow*, there is an undeniable whiff of *for-deuce* masculinity to all the on-screen carnage. **Aston Blvd**

Anticipation. He's made over 80 films in 20 years – so Mike should have no trouble handling 13 heroes. **4**

Enjoyment. By turns exciting, horrific, funny and thrilling – but mostly intense and always spectacular. **4**

In Retrospect. Mike's magnificent 13 mark both the end of an era and the boundary of a genre. **4**

Bridesmaids

Directed by **Paul Feig**
 Starring **Kristen Wiig, Maya Rudolph, Rose Byrne**
 Released **June 24**



The odds were steep stacked against *Bridesmaids* a month before it opened, but that's exactly what director Paul Feig wanted. Comedy that strayed from the stable of Judd Apatow and promised the audience's wildest kind of satirical excesses mixed with equally on-the-edge masculinity.

Here, the allegedly sexy hook (and, really, Apatow's increasingly enflamed product from *Sex War* to *Punchy People* to *Get Him in the Groove* – a moving a very long) is based on the fact that the guys are the same, and so is the hitting/battering, but the female protagonists (the fat one, the needy one, the cool one) have all had their penises removed and are now women (yep, forward Kristen Wiig, Rose Byrne, Maya Rudolph et al). Yep, the ladies have taken over the first house. And they've got a huge first act disaster set just to prove it.

And yes, the real shock here, in this story of pre-wedding insanity amongst six mismatched bridesmaids, is not that it's raucous and Apatow-by-convention, but rather that it aspires at any

amount that form with ultra chilling originality. This, cleverest anecdote, the wry sump, co-written by Wiig, offers more than just the usual post-feminist RITE-style cleverness (although an opening sex scene between Wiig's Anne and comic boyfriend Ted, played by Jon Hamm, nicely pillows an older gender's standard sexual technique).

Indeed, as Anne accepts the role of playing model of honor to her friend Lillian (Dakota Fanning), in the presence of the job and the demands of glowing five other bridesmaids slowly leaves her to succeed, the movie offers some possibly accurate commentary on the caption competitiveness underlying female friendships.

The conspicuously unattached Anne's hysterically degraded reaction to the news of Lillian's engagement (a half-mile train to a room of honor) is emblematic of its state more than a full of little digs and snide aimed at female rivalry. It's no wonder that the highlight of the movie is a scene

face-off between Anne, a jewelry store clerk by day, and a mean-spirited teenage girl (the line, "We're a little snafu" has even been so hilariously delivered).

There are also problems. It's far too long, over-crammed with sexual innuendo, and hampered by a ludicrous ongoing finale. But, really, bottom line: it's the best thing Apatow's put his name to in years. **Kevie Maher**

Anticipation. It's *Knocked Up*. But with women! **2**

Enjoyment. It's funnier than *Punchy People*. **4**

In Retrospect. Could've been even funnier without that ending. **3**



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Third Star

Directed by **Hutton Dalton**

Starring **Hugh Bonneville, Tom Burke, Benedict Cumberbatch**

Released **May 28**



The Latin phrase *momento mori* serves as a medical sub-theme in all of the reviewer's own mortality. In short, it reminds us that we are human and must one day die. When handled with sophistication, or even with a sense of black humor, that is all very well and good. But when a tactlessly crafted film about a dying man's last days comes along, the reminder becomes almost as welcome as the Grim Reaper knocking at your door.

Whitby-based *James' Day* wants us to be taken to his favorite spot at Sandhills Bay in Whitby for one last time. Three men who seem to have very little in common (apparently dedicated old friends) realize *James' Day* (albeit impressed) with *Whit* what looks like a small town here in town, the timeless images proceeds to what these steady mates across the beautiful Whitby scene of their great trip.

Not only does *Third Star* attempt to portray the reality of coming to terms with death in a far too visceral way, it adds insult to injury by using

the most common disease of our age as a catalyst. Cancer James is played by Benedict Cumberbatch who, earlier this year, impressively portrayed the bitter melancholy of Mary Shirley's husband in the National Theatre. But when Cumberbatch's character made audiences feel genuine empathy, his final and hopeless character in *Third Star* manages to evoke few comments.

In fact, as *James' Day* under shows it to his friends, or gropes desperately through his pockets for the morphine that relieves his incompressible pain, the film slowly becomes unpleasant to watch. It's clear that the filmmakers' intention is to show audiences the "raw face" of cancer. Nonetheless, we must question, is this really necessary? Even if it is shot against a very nice Whitby scene, do we want to see eyes rolling and hair sprouting? That is not, after all, an anti-mocking of that needs to employ disturbing shock tactics.

Either show making films that remind us of our mortality, why not make those that remind us of our fleeting immortality? Peter that, perhaps, share the wisdom of Joan Marie Melchior's *Purification* in Godard's *Weekend*. To be immortal... and then die? *Zora Miller*

Subscription. Picked to close the 2010 Edinburgh Film Festival **3**

Enjoyment. A film that has the ability to run your day as an accomplishment, in a way **1**

In Retrospect. *Third Star* has a good heart, it's just not worth as many stars **2**

The Messenger

Directed by **Oren Moverman**

Starring **Ben Foster, Jesse Plemons, Woody Newhall**

Released **May 28**



Don't shoot 'em, give 'em the message. But what if a messenger picked up on your doorstep to deliver the worst news of your life? Not that director Oren Moverman's intense, heavy-hearted drama actually involves any such position. It's emotional fireworks that are the primary focus, with *The Messenger* following two army officers tasked with delivering bad news to the family members of dead soldiers.

"I'm not going to be offering any hugs, sir," grates Staff Sergeant Will Montgomery (Ben Foster), whose life has been the definition of "spending despair" ever since he got back from Iraq. The "sir" is question, nonetheless, is Captain Tony Stone (Woody Newhall), the kind of guy who makes the bad-news missions in *Alone* look like *Easy* lessons. Together, they do the job nobody else wants to.

It's a smart premise, the director's excellent shot, affording *The Messenger* a freshness that the bullet-riddled, war-weariness of *The Kingdom* couldn't hope to attain. Of course, it helps to have had a man on the inside. An co-producer himself, Moverman clearly has talents to connect with his visceral debut.

Unleashing in his endeavors to explore the pain and horror of those left behind during times of war, Moverman reveals what his performance from his cast ("You feeling crowded?" screams a panic Steve Buscemi, the

fringe of a dead soldier), while also unearthing the midnight humor in the harrowing scenes ("Could be worse, could be Christmas," deadpans Tony during one rough job).

Though Harrison was the one committed for super sounds, Foster is the eye of the storm here. Through him, Moverman crafts his tormented square war, with Foster never anything less than 100 per cent up to the task. *The Messenger* is a movie that delivers its own moral tale — one many are probably not going to like. *Josh Winick*

Subscription. Long delayed war movie starring a surfer **4**

Enjoyment. Well-crafted, taut with emotion, but vaguely directionless. Foster has a **3**

In Retrospect. It stumbles a little, lessening its grip in the bureaucratic final stretch. But of imperialist heartening pluckage is what you're after, this is where it's at. **4**

Blitz

Directed by **Elliot Lester**
 Starring **Jason Statham, Paddy Considine, Aidan Gillen**
 Released May 28



Based on the Ken Brann novel of the same name, *Blitz* is an oppressive and bleak crime thriller, which, despite its awfully predictable formula, actually packs some unique punches.

Jason Statham plays *Blitz*, a London cop with a play-by-the-own-rules approach to street justice and maintaining the law (but the boundaries for high-grade misconduct). Statham now has stable dinner than *Outman* (George St) and an accent more accented than *Chorus Blue* (played by Jerry, named and secretly admired by colleagues, and usually ignored by women). *Blitz* is certainly someone we've encountered before. We've seen various manifestations of his ilk in John McGee, *Anti-Foley* and *Maxine Rags*, but Statham's riotously close alongside that kind of company – although it's predictable, it feels right. Unfortunately, "light" will definitely add up to original.

A versus police act seen by local than *Blitz* (Jerry Wins, also *The Blue*) (officially played by Aidan Gillen), otherwise chief cop *Porter Nash* (Chadly

Considine) takes over the investigation. The fact that he's openly gay leads to clashes with *Blitz*.

Despite the fact that *Blitz* is layered with cliché, often a pretty poor critique on authoritarianism in the media, terrible one-liners and some winceingly familiar characters, the story is somehow engaging. What binds the whole thing together is that all important action movie trope: a really, really good bad guy.

Aidan Gillen shows as a morning, orthodoxy challenged and his due city values with an solitary complex. Considine and Statham are okay, but it's Gillen who's holding court here.

Visually the film isn't anything to lose your mind over – a few cool icons that followed by some eye-catching hard-edged men, bustling wide gaze of London and a few duty-free passes. It's aesthetically sound, as it to be expected of a relatively independent director like *Blitz* (Lester).

The themes are ramble considering the center's metropolitan settings: loneliness, fight

with loneliness and a hopelessness struggle to one nature. But *Blitz* isn't a film that will blow apart your preconceptions about police cinema. It's all been seen before and will be seen again, and again. **Dominic Redcliffe**

Anticipation. A film with Jason Statham as a violent cop is going to be predictable. **2**

Enjoyment. The performance from Aidan Gillen makes it engaging, the brooding outlook keeps it in place. **3**

In Retrospect. At times acceptable, at times like a truly mediocre episode of *Robert Watson*. **2**

Le Quattro Volte

Directed by **Michelangelo Pomarancio**
 Starring **Giuseppe Fudo, Bruno Timpane, Nerone Timpane**
 Released May 27



An elderly shepherd lives his twilight days as a quiet medieval village perched high on the hills of Calabria, in the southeastern tip of Italy. The birds grow under skin that more villagers long ago deserted. The man is old but finds his medicine in the dust he collects by the church floor, which he religiously adds to his drinking water.

When the man finally expires a goat is born. We follow its first tentative steps until it gains strength and goes to pasture. Nearby, a maypole for two men in the mountain breeze and slowly changes through the seasons.

Based on the Pythagorean theory that each of us has been made as which it was one another, Michelangelo Pomarancio's *Le Quattro Volte* is reminiscent of *Uchi Senso* (The One Who Knows The First Love) in its look at the transmigration of the human soul.

Offering a poetic vision of the cycles of life and nature, and the universal traditions of a timeless place straddling the conflict between past and present – and between ancient and modern beliefs – the film, which is entering in its third production, evolved from Pomarancio's desire to put man's role as the grander scheme of things into perspective.

Though relying on very direct references to other works, the director cites *Samuel Beckett* and *Robert Bresson's Au Hasard Balthazar* as influences. If all this makes *Le Quattro Volte* sound overly dry and academic,

Gordon Kopp's *Ship Funnels* and *Raymond Depardon's Mille Lys* may be more enticing points of reference in terms of the unbroken peace and the quietly gripping study of the connection between character and setting.

Involving the Calabrian residents in the making of the film, Pomarancio – a former architect who has cultivated a passion in the connection between physical space and images – has crafted a beautiful work that feels incredibly personal, expressive and poetic. **Jesse Wood**

Anticipation. A second feature that sounds a little obscure but which trails acclaim from numerous international festivals. **3**

Enjoyment. A transcendental viewing experience that is, in its own understating way, quite unique. **4**

In Retrospect. Meditative, calm, and profound, *Le Quattro Volte* offers a momentary respite from the hustle of contemporary life. **4**

Gregg Araki

Surrealist Soldier

Interview by Adam Woodward

Filmography
Gregg Araki

Kuluwa (1992)
Smiley Face (1993)
Mysterious Skin (2004)
Splendor (1998)
Numbers (1997)
The Doom Generation (1995)
*Totally F*cked Up* (1994)
The Living End (1992)
The Long Weekend (O'Jays) (1993)
Three Reincarnated People in the Night (1995)

Even months after being awarded the inaugural Queen Palm at the Cannes Film Festival, *IFTA* asserts Gregg Araki: on heads day of the 25th IFFI London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, where *Kuluwa* — the film that won him the accolade — is about to cut the ribbon. It's an honor to which the 51-year-old director is well accustomed, having been a participant twice in making the profile of gay cinema ever since his 1989 feature, *The Long Weekend (O'Jays)*, picked up the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Independent-Exemplary Award. Times have changed, but what does it mean to Araki to be an LGBT filmmaker in twenty-first-century America?

"There are a lot of challenges in getting the kinds of movies that I make financed and distributed. It's not a black and white thing. There's been a lot of progress, though, certainly in the span of my career. So much has happened, and whether it's Ang Lee winning the Oscar for *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, or even *Glis*, it all helps to raise the profile of a gay voice," he says. "Gay cinema is more prevalent in the mainstream than it has ever been, but it's still two steps forward one step back. It's constantly easier to make a film about lesbians — if *The Rich As All Right* was about two guys it definitely would have been more challenging, because just that notion of two guys with children is upsetting to Middle America. But at the same impact, two women with children is now widely accepted, and that has to be seen as progress."

Like most aspects of social evolution, heading down the stages surrounding homosexuality in cinema is being done in baby steps, not strides. But where Gus Van Sant, Todd Haynes, John Cameron Mitchell and other New Queer Cinema pioneers of the early '90s have since settled into more contained territory, Araki is still fiercely independent and

passionately nonconformist, happily admitting that "a film like *Kuluwa* is never going to break into the mainstream."

This acknowledgment suits Araki as a rare breed here in a filmmaker who frequently goes out of his way to subvert expectations, one who openly denounces those who aspire to paint Hollywood pink. But despite smacking the imagination that comes with gay, Araki hasn't let the radical streak that first turned heads in Southern California in the late '80s. "I was growing up and studying in Santa Barbara at a time when post-punk subculture and that whole new wave music scene was really starting to explode," he recalls. "Because of that formative influence, I've always seen myself as representing an esoteric alternative to the blandness and the conservatism of mainstream, Middle America. Films like *Kuluwa* are hard to make because of the conservatism that exists in the States even today, but I've always set out to question the norm, and with this film I really wanted to make something that was totally different to anything else out there."

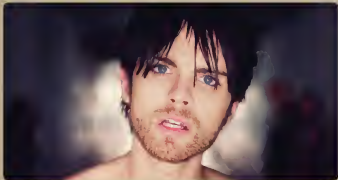
If *Kuluwa* is different, it is also unmistakably an Araki film, one born from a deeply personal place, as he reveals. "I've never made a movie before that's been so closely related to my own life. I was just like Smith, the school he goes to is based on UC Santa Barbara, which is where I did my undergrad at Film Studies, and has been friend in the film, Smith, is an art major who wears crazy outfits all the time. All of these scenarios and experiences that they have are based on things I was doing at the time. The only difference is that I didn't have as much sex."

Anyone who has ever dipped into Araki's filmography will know that sex is a prevalent theme in his work. Yet when the likes of *Mysterious Skin* and *The Doom Generation* presented sexuality

diagnosed views of sex and youthful promiscuity, *Kuluwa* is a celebration of the ingenuity of teenage sexuality. "I wanted the film to show sexuality in a positive light," he admits, "which is very un-American. American film is very puritanical and hypocritical when it comes to sex, and I wanted *Kuluwa* to really embrace the idea of that sexual openness. Those years of your life are not so much about the stress and the papers, it's the people you sleep with and the relationships you have. To this day, those are the things that have had the most impact on my life."

With such a strong connection to his roots, it's not hard to see how Araki has managed to carve out such a distinctive niche for himself. As he approaches the next phase of his career, however, he suggests that his focus will more likely be informed not by retrospection, but by an urge to discover a new aspect of himself. "As a filmmaker I'd like to keep challenging myself and try to make something different from this project. Not a lot of people realize this, but I passed on *Myerson* this three times before I made it; I made it when I was ready. And I never in a million years would've expected myself to make a movie like *Smiley Face*, although I've really proud of that movie. Besides, I love movies like *The Living End*," he continues, "but it's about the guy being in a different person. I'm totally different now, and I think that I'll continue to seek change in myself. It's interesting for me to see that progression in my mindset and where I am in life when I think back to the movies I made 10 or 15 years ago. But wherever I'm at in the future, I'll only ever make movies that I love and am passionate about."

Check out the full transcript online at www.ifta.com.



Kaboom

Directed by Gregg Araki

Starring Thomas Doherty, Haley Bennett, Jane Wollam

Released June 18

After 2004's hard-hitting third alone drama *Mysterious Skin*, the mid-1990s of 1997's sitcom comedy *Smiley Face* were enough for some to whisper that Gregg Araki had gone soft. Four years on, the LA filmmaker has answered those critics with an emphatic loud clap.

A spicy, genre-mashing valentine to youthful exuberance and sexual experimentation, *Kaboom* follows a group of unobservant goateous teens who become embroiled in a nightmarish murder mystery, as evidenced through the hallucinogenic gaze of the film's chief protagonist, Smith (Thomas Doherty).

With the lines between fantasy and reality increasingly blurred, Araki lets loose, immersing us in a world of every sexual act and apocalyptic psychedelia. Promiscuous swimmers and an actual nude-swimming cult locate Smith's twisted fiction, only for his growing paranoia to be warded away by comic gal pal Stella (Haley Bennett) and freewheeling fuck buddy London (Jane Wollam). Is Smith just tripping, or are there more sinister demons at work?

Araki is at his best when his broad influences are distilled into a cohesive narrative. Here, however, counterpoint, idiosyncrasy. Sometimes another look-into and characters, tempering scenes

and hole before they're ever allowed to release. This is vintage Araki - surreal, disquieting, feverishly fun - but the fan-planning thematic parallels with the writer-director's excellent 'Teenage Apocalypse Trilogy' aren't given the breathing space required to appeal to a wider audience.

Even so, his raw, unadorned escapism, *Kaboom* is hard to beat. Araki is a scholar of the subculture, and his self-made style of experimentalism has long been a jewel in the crown of American indie cinema. But that latest tale of world-weary Californians from somewhere feels less organic, less pure. The jewel has lost its lustre a little. The nihilistic director of *Heavenly Creatures*, *Smoke* and *The Groom vanishes* is blunted, the raucous puncher of those early films now glowing blurs.

Kaboom is romantic, nostalgic and introspective, but as an autobiographical commentary on college life it's surprisingly evasive, offering little insight into why Araki has chosen to indulge in self-reflection at this juncture in his career. Perhaps Stella sums it up best: "College is just an intersection between high school and the rest of your life. Four years of having sex, making stupid mistakes and experiencing stuff. It's a pit stop, not the Second Coming of the Messiah."

Still, the fact that *Kaboom* was decorated with the first rose Quire Palm at last year's Cannes Film Festival is a sign that, almost 20 years into his filmmaking career, Araki has become as important to today's LGBT generation as John Waters was to his. Contemporary gay cinema doesn't need a messiah, but it does need Araki, because while *Kaboom* isn't a gem in his best form, he is by now surely its most bold and dynamic ambassador. **Adam Woodward**

Anticipation: Sounds intriguing, but Araki has been inconsistent in recent years.

Engagement: A highly fetishized, hyper-current teenage *Teen Peaks* that's undone by its own excesses and a lack of narrative clarity.

In Retrospect: Bright and pioneering, but too cluttered to be placed alongside the director's best.

Everywhere and Nowhere

Directed by *Manoel de Oliveira*
Starring *James Floyd, Adam Deacon, Alvy Khan*
Released *May 6*



Not a film style has been raised and swung out to the point of parody, it takes some courage to attempt another come back. Courage? Or the mere sound of the too often only repeated? The one in question is this gritty French urban thriller modeled on the lines of *Kidulthood*, *Shabazz* and their spoofing younger brethren, *Abuse of Power*. With a world seen, low neighborhoods left to expose, *Kidulthood* director Manolo de Oliveira has now decided to turn his lens *Everywhere and Nowhere*.

Oliveira's film follows the existential crisis of a young French-African wannabe DJ who, when asked where he comes from, replies (dramatic pause) "everywhere and nowhere." Unfortunately, after this, the film doesn't go on to enlighten its audience with further philosophical insight, but simply indulges the existence of a teenage boy.

All Ash (played by James Floyd) dreams of is making rock chords in Paris, but he is quickly brought back to reality by his now-faded father, who makes him work at the family convenience store. Luckily, he has three good mates, a supportive mum, a disheartened script and some crude clothes to help him through his modern-day plight.

The old, mature yourself as a habit to clear your head routine is not so easy to achieve moments in this unadorned portrait of the present where French cinema meets the American Dream. This comic style is helped further by the fact that Ash is surrounded by people who have a habit of ending each sentence

with a contrived moral message, not that Simon Webb from boy band Blue happens to be his idol.

That said, of the many subjects that orbit poor Ash, there are a couple of quite good ones – a particularly touching one stars Adam Deacon as a second-generation immigrant brought up by his pot-smoking granddad poignantly longing for home. If only Hade had run with the thread of the one with the alien target audience – teenagers who love music and love to hate their parents. *Not cheap!* *Extra Miles*

Anticipation. *Kidulthood* was an original and unprecedented success. Perhaps *Everywhere and Nowhere* could be too.

2

Enjoyment. Fitting neither the gritty urban drama mould, nor the tongue-in-cheek one leaves audiences laughing when they've not meant to be.

1

In Retrospect. All of a sudden, the once eye-opening film about life on the streets of London seems to be everywhere, when it really ought to be nowhere.

1

Red Hill

Directed by *Patrick Hughes*
Starring *Ryan Kwanten, Steve Healey, Tom H. Lewis*
Released *May 26*



Once a flourishing outback community, Red Hill is an all-white island of outmoded Australian colonial values, narrowed somewhere between the prehistoric past (see the rocky Aboriginal domains in the town's infamously crooked) and an advanced modernity.

Most of the population has been since drilled away, but gay-dy crop Shave (Ryan Kwanten) is a rare new arrival – a blow in from the Big Smoke looking for a quiet life with his pregnant wife. On Shave's first day, two deadly threats – a native tracker imprisoned for murder years before, and a cryptic big cat – will run the town. As police captain Old Bill (Steve Healey) and his second posse try to bury the town's shameful past, Shave can finally stand up on his middle and become the law – if he survives the night without a car, a gun, or a hope in hell.

Wrote/directed Patrick Hughes' former debut transplants the tropes of the outer fringe (a horseback hero named Shave, gun-and-horn soundtrack, street shootouts and avianic strength) to the shifting ideological landscape of Victoria's High Country, while also shyly upholding the persistence of Australia's revolutionary civil rights movement by having the effects of a corrupt constabulary disrupted by two "black panthers" – one metaphorical, the other very literal.

As the lean-coated vengeance-seeker Jan Conway, Tom H. Lewis is an effort repeating his role from *The Ghost of Jesus Macabre* (1978) – yet while Hughes respects all the old wounds of social injustice exposed by that earlier film, he also offers a vision of contemporary Australia pregnant with the possibility of a more just future, whereas old-world values of masculinity

and racism might be replaced by an enlightened equality and openness. So this is *Book of a Newborn* under with a twist: and enough genre thrills and dark humor to keep anyone accustomed. *Amos Bitt*

Anticipation. A modern-day *The Proposition*

3

Enjoyment. With a wild black cat on the loose!

4

In Retrospect. Deftly balances an allegory of a nation's colonial shame with rustic 'trotter' entertainment.

4

Rio Breaks

Directed by **Justin Marshall**
Released **June 2**



Imagine a huge hillside favela near Aposenda Beach, Rio de Janeiro. The story of this place, you may think, reeks of guns, drugs and gangs. But that's just one narrative in a tapestry of color, noise and emotion that makes up life on the east coast of South America.

The favelas are bursting with spirit, and it takes a sensitive camera—in this case, LA-based director Justin Marshall and Brazilian-born writer Vince Medeiros (publisher of the magazine) to pluck a story from the soundtrack and give it space to breathe.

Marshall and Medeiros base it on the Favela Surf Club, a non-profit institute that encourages young people to feel empowered through surfing, thus avoiding the drug trade that, with a few exceptions, has dominated the lives of the favela's residents. The film follows two friends—Paulo, 15, and Nuno, 12—in a coming-of-age tale that is punctuated by poverty, poor parents and the raw pleasure of riding waves.

Sensationalism and gun-toting, grenade-belt-wearing vigilantes are quickly absent from this thoughtful documentary—although they were very much behind the scenes. Instead, hope and humor take the place of shock and patos, the latter only creeping through in vulnerable moments when Paulo talks about his late father, or when the two remember a school friend who was caught in the conflict. For the most part, we see the world through the anxious lens of childhood, and unapologetic optimism on kids, adults and gals naps a sometimes heart-breaking sadness.

From beginning to end, this fast-paced doc into a difficult world—backdrop to the affluent shores of Ipanema and testament to the widespread poverty of wealth in Brazil—remains wholeheartedly positive. It speaks of a people oppressed but full of soul, and optimism, with charming awareness, communicates too often defined by fear and ignorance.

The credits roll before the reappearance of Nuno and his family—thanks to TV personality Luciano Huck—and soon after the chequerboard maps that,

Felipe goes off the radar altogether. But the film will remain. Astonishingly captured at a pivotal moment in its young participants' lives, *Rio Breaks* is a mirrored story about youth, freedom and fighting to protect the things you love. **Shelley Jones**

Anticipation. Scores of war from poor countries make clichéd docs for armchair activists. **2**

Enjoyment. Totally, radically life-affirming. Will make you reassess the important things. **4**

In Retrospect. Beautiful, sun-bleached scenes, dialogue and emotions stay with you like tide marks. **4**

The Big Picture

Directed by **Ross Laughton**
Starring **Roman Duris, Marina Foïs, Catherine Deneuve**
Released **June 16**



Paul (Roman Duris) wanted to be a photographer. Sarah (Marina Foïs) wanted a photographer. Instead, the married couple have settled successfully at an office suburb of Paris, where Paul's stuck at an office job and she's found her dream man in the shape of their neighbor, Gégé (Olivier Baot). Paul and Sarah are exhausted by who they've become—wealthy but lost, content but never happy. "I want the other's love."

Then, one fateful morning, Paul confronts Gégé over the office. There's a scuffle. A broken bottle lands on Gégé's neck, and Paul's glory, bloodless encounter turns suddenly into his life work (Gégé's identity [including the dream job] and goes on the run in Hungary. He's a new man, quite literally.

The *Big Picture* takes less on character development than character evolution, but Roman Duris plays the dramatic side of the role as deftly

that the break between one Paul and another (and one Gégé and the other) feels natural, expected, even longed for. Paul, the naive family man fleeing with the world, becomes Gégé—an artist, a cat person who wishes that one terrible act has simultaneously taken away everything he had and given him everything he ever wanted.

The poems of the second half of the film is, necessarily, a bit heavy. Director Ross Laughton emphasizes Gégé's renewed interest in the world by slowing the editing to a crawl. After the speed of Paris, the long shots of Hungarian country life are a job, but we need to learn to look at Gégé's world (rather than Paul's) with him, through his camera lens. The movie from crime thriller to brooding drama is fairly quick, but it doesn't feel forced or bare.

There's a rather odd, Lilianesque ending, but it doesn't spoil anything. By that point, Paul

and Gégé have both become others. The story has become about the work. The art becomes bigger than the artist. In a way, it always was. **Henry Barnes**

Anticipation. There have been a few failed attempts at filming Douglas Kennedy's book already, but Duris is a must-watch. **3**

Enjoyment. A weirdly exhilarating piece of soap opera that morphs into a serious study of art and self-discovery. **4**

In Retrospect. Thoughtfully and skillfully done. Duris is superb. **4**

Stake Land

Directed by **Jim Mickle**
 Starring **Nick Damici, Connor Paolo, Kelly McGillis**
 Released **June 17**



In *Stake Land*, a plague of vampires has turned America into a baroque waste populated by wred entities and looted-down communities. When young Martin's (Connor Paolo) parents are killed, he is taken under the wing of a gruffed campaigner known as "Mater" (Nick Damici), who teaches him the art of removing the profits from the undead. Together they travel towards a possibly mythical safe haven somewhere in the far north, and along the way pick up a man, a pregnant girl and an ex-Marine.

Director Jim Mickle takes things off center locally, including a distant early scene where Mater grows characteristically as Momo while rubbing garlic oil into his favorite stile. After that, though, the film returns into an elegant story of life on the trail that puts you in mind of Walter Hill's iconic westerns. *The Long Riders*, while the use of Paolo as narrator seems like a nod to the neo-western as Tennessee Mickle's classic moment.

The apocalypse has had mixed results. Although searchy ruins in the wilderness – thanks to the Christian Brotherhood, a bunch of overzealous crosses who believe that vampires have been sent to punish the wicked – other communities show a touching adherence to the ways of a more civilized past, putting on street markets and dances, and stocking their shops with lured drinks that the shying suspension of humanity's weakness and vulnerability

is, trekking north, the protagonists dwell into the restlessness of the landscape.

What's not to say that characterization is overlooked. The script (written by Mickle and Damici) works in an unforged way the relationship that develop on the trail. At times their interaction achieves an almost Fockian simplicity. There's a moment when the pregnant girl awakes and Mater scoops her up and glides on with her through the moon-lit forest, and she knows, that he will carry her forever if he has to.

The third act dips heavily into *Resident Evil* mode, but after that the film finds its feet again and delivers a deeply felt conclusion, poised between hope and realism. **John White**

Anticipation. Hordes of the undead? Pangs very much! **3**

Enjoyment. This beautiful vampire movie drives a spike right through your heart! **4**

In Retrospect. A film that shrugs off its small budget to present a meditation on survival and suffering. **4**

The Taqwacores

Directed by **Ryad Zuhair**
 Starring **Bobby Naderi, Noureen DeWulf, Dominic Rains**
 Released **June 17**



A n amalgamation of 'Tape' – an Islamic trend denoting love and fear of Allah – and 'hardcore', *Taqwacore* was originally little more than the rebellious dream of disillusioned young Muslim writer Michael Muhammad Knight, whose novel of the same name (largely photocopied and passed out manifesto-style on car parks) is here adapted for the screen.

Yusef (Bobby Naderi), a first-generation-Pakistani muslim indoctrinated by well-meaning parents, struggles to adapt to a new life when he moves into a house of Muslim punk. Newly introduced in a world where his religious, alcohol-drinking, drug-taking, lewdness approach their religion as something to be interrogated and assimilated ecumenically – as one character puts it, "Allah is too big and too open for my Islam to be small and closed." Yusef finds his own mind slowly opening, and his world is finally exploded by a party in which local *Taqwacore* bands are invited to the house to play.

Neatly structured across the course of an academic year, with the punk's subversion challenging of Islam reinforced by our alignment with the rough-and-ready Yusef, the film is a sensitive examination of some thorny issues, touching on (among other things) promiscuity sex, homosexuality and the place of women within the faith.

Director Ryad Zuhair's adaptation of the novel is not entirely comfortable, with dialogue that sometimes feels unnaturally dropped into the

characters' mouths – not least a scene in which one ill-fated character complains about being "swapped up in my manufacturing of deconstructed culture", a sentence that must have been lifted directly from Knight's own.

The film comes into its own as it turns towards the final score, with fast-cut, hand-held footage of parties and bands capturing a much-needed respect. The last few minutes are suffused with both an earnest, intimate energy and pathos, as the kids learn to understand and come to terms with their identity posturing within and without their faith.

Despite suffering from some *Ramp* performances, *The Taqwacore* is a refreshing for an unusual perspective and the boldness of its unquenchable style. **Chris Roddy**

Anticipation. A first feature from an unknown director, about a niche subject. **2**

Enjoyment. A slow starter that ultimately finds a frenetic, punky energy. **3**

In Retrospect. Pie-in-the-sky but bravely interrogates a difficult subject. **3**



Hanna

Directed by Joe Wright

Starring Saoirse Ronan, Eric Fenn, Cate Blanchett

Released May 6

From the bloodied chaos of *Dunkirk* to the parental stresses of *LA's Inland*, Joe Wright has long sought to extract beauty from chaos. No surprise, then, that oil-painting compositions pepper the British director's first crack at high-energy action like furies of color in a storm of bullets and explosives. Indeed, a dramatic modulation of a scene needed between broken plates in a Panini ice-drift establishes an uneasy power equilibrium before our protagonists become unmoored here! With no arrive

Along been eased in isolation in the better sub-zero wilderness by her father, Erik (Eric Fenn), Hanna (Saoirse Ronan), is heading in Wright's *Assessment* (and again here) is more accustomed to getting their shot. Having boys. As well as making *Kick-Ass*'s *Big-Girl* look like a puffy apple-pie-butter, our Hanna's a multilingual assassin. Missing? Not only will she deliver a fiery pay-off line after she's finished. Looking you up, she'll have the common courtesy to do so in your mother tongue.

Meanwhile Cate Blanchett recycles her wondrous swing from *Reign of Fire* to good effect as CIA anti-back Mamma Wagner, who's hellbent on

tracking down Hanna and her "rogue agent" pops after they cohesively blow their own cover.

As Erik reaches, Hanna is exposed. Out of the forest and into the real world angle, she'll have to negotiate a host of unknown hazards, but there's no someone that first child can't bear and hand her way out of There's an area here, however, so that Hanna's fight for survival, while exhilarating, never provides that last-edge moment, that flick of fallibility that's so crucial when it comes to humanizing action heroes.

This oversight is addressed later on by a sequence concerning Hanna's superhuman DNA, but this is a key character development, not the thought-provoking twist a presumably looked on paper.

That's not to say that Ronan doesn't shine. After being mentored by Peter Jackson and Wain in her previous two big-screen outings, the 17-year-old holds her own convincingly alongside a deliciously fierce Blanchett. The pair share barely a fraction of screen time, but their on-and-offscreen chemistry is undeniable when you consider how incongruous the rest of the cast feels (including Fenn, who contributes for a few speedy camera changes before getting lost in the plot). As if Wright's candor to show off his

artistic. One and point Hanna as a treated modern-day fairy tale isn't jarring enough, Tom Hollander channeling *Anna Karenina* as a campy neo-Nazi luxury-hunter certainly wasn't called for.

A thrashing Classical Western score adds routine fight sequences with some much-needed signs, but any intrigue established in the film's intimate scenes is smothered by a director unable to overcome his own art house ambivalence. **Adam Woodward**

Anticipation. After hitting a dull note with *The Secret*, Joe Wright rediscovered his voice!

3

Enjoyment. Not quite. *Hanna* is the British director's woodiest and most disjointed film yet. Ronan saves his blushes, though.

3

In Retrospect. Fun in places but unfulfilling as a whole.

2

Lucy Walker

Nuclear Prophet

Interview by Tom Seymour

Filmography
Lucy Walker

Countdown to Zero (2005)

Waste Land (2004)

Blindsight (2000)

Dad's Playground (1992)

Little more than a year after an earthquake devastated parts of northeastern Japan. As we talk, 24-hour news channels are obsessing over Fukushima as its nuclear disaster is going into meltdown. Walker has completed a publicly funded film in Japan and is partially aware of this renewed FR creep. The topic himself more than once from saying "I told you so", but it must be tempting.

Countdown to Zero, which she wrote and directed, is a graphic reminder of the risks we take when we play with nuclear power, whether in the past or future or weaponry. Most of the footage originates from the defunct Soviet Union remains unaccounted for, terrorism has proliferated, and our current generation of nuclear energy plants are rendered, crumbling colossuses constructed in the '70s - given built on feet of clay.

"I remember thinking at the time of the Iraq war, 'If I'm right, then bad stuff is going to happen', and unfortunately I think I was right," Walker says. "I did the same way now. If I'm right about nuclear weapons, then I think there's a real and grave risk of something absolutely awful happening. It gives me no pleasure to say this is the worst report there is here."

"Trivial with I wasn't sitting here worrying about Japan's nuclear meltdown," she adds, "but that's what we say in the film - that the risk is never zero, and with nuclear the consequences of something going wrong are really grave. I don't want to be right, I want to be proved wrong."

There are not the kind of expert documentary quotes you might expect from Lucy Walker. A student of the Observer political columnist Will Hutton, and an alumna of both Oxford University and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, she is a dyed-in-the-wool member of the liberal elite, a moderate documentary in every sense and one of the first to study take advantage of the handsome fee, small, portable cameras allow.

Walker has used this to access top communities of people, like those in the Ozean-nuclear film

Land - the coastline that lies in the shadow of the Dai Ichi Jansetsu, and who eventually joined her on the red carpet in Los Angeles. So why the about-turn? Why the attention to a more conventional contemporary film, heavy on messages and graphics and talking heads?

"It [the whole the important movie the dramatic movie the red, and making a film about nuclear weapons is not very easy. It's not such an easy job, but I don't like easy pictures. I like challenges," she explains. "It's really hard to make a film that warns with a topic, and it's really hard to make a film about a topic that no one wants you to film and no one wants you to say anything about, just because we've got all these amazing interviews in *Countdown* doesn't mean it wasn't really hard to get them. Even though when you get someone agreeing to sit down, it's still hard because the tendency is to say very safe platitudes about these things - 'We must be safe with nuclear weapons. We must get the numbers down.' These kind of things aren't really scary, dramatic."

"That [Hutton] did participate in the nuclear war as a film," she continues. "I did try and shoot some real scenes but it was really hard with permission - it was lightning and I decided I find it much more when there's a particular story to follow. I've done three films like that and it's much more inspiring for me. But off to the editors because it was a hard film to edit when there isn't a clear chronology or narrative."

"Last of all there's this subject and you only see the top in the film," Walker adds. "The good news is, what you see in the film is guided by a tremendous amount of research and reflection."

That research and reflection comes from interviews with some big names of the Soviet and post-Soviet era, including Gary Klint, Jimmy Carter, Mikhail Gorbachev, Robert McNamara, Ferris Malmgren and Vance Platts. Walker. Was she impressed by these powerful political figures?

"I definitely really tried to take them on," Walker replies. "I wouldn't say that I was unimpressed with any of them. I tried to generally think that for anyone to agree to be filmed is actually really courageous,

and especially with this issue. I think it's actually a big risk because if you talk about these weapons, you associate yourself with them by discussing them. It would be much easier to not talk about them."

"We had Steven US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's last interview before he died, and he really wanted to impart the idea that he had changed his mind on this issue. He wanted people to know that nations will be deterred if these weapons weren't destroyed. He was on his death bed and that was his parting act, and that was very powerful."

Walker participates the film with footage of the cities that have been victims of terrorism over the last decade - London, Moscow, New York, Berlin, Madrid and so on. She finishes with footage of Times Square on New Year's Eve intersect with scientists describing the impact of a nuclear bomb on a city: a five-mile radius better than the radius of the sun - no hospitals, no police, no government, no shelter, no food. The image of annihilation.

"I wanted to put that at the end of the film when people had been re-educated and re-oriented. I thought if you put it at the end it would be much more impactful. If people thought 'Oh God, these weapons could go off,' I wanted to remind them of what kind of destruction these weapons could do, and they are so much more powerful than the one that hit on Hiroshima. Modern mainstream weapons are a Hiroshima-style device in their line. It's really amazing to think about the massive size, so I wanted to do that at one go, as a dramatic metaphor. What I really didn't want to do is cut away only to the nuclear cloud."

"We don't have the chance of a few countries having a well-secured arsenal and that hoping the rest of the world ends," Walker concludes. "Regardless of whether you think that was a good plan, forget it. Unless we really get together and work out how this world is run, we're going to be in a situation where a lot of states and non-state super states are going to be able to have access to that stuff."

Check out the full transcript online at jane.com.



Countdown to Zero

Edited by Lucy Walker

Starring Jimmy Carter, Mikhail Gorbachev, Robert McNamara

Released June 24

There's a theory that if something can happen, it will happen. Usually something bad. So it goes in *Countdown to Zero*, in which a remarkable gallery of politicians and military experts pose as the men on mankind's destiny with fiery, planet-threatening nuclear war. Buckle up.

Following the Oscar-winning efforts of *An Inconvenient Truth* to save the world from mankind via ecological disaster, producer Lawrence Bender attempts to repeat the trick for atomic Armageddon. Breaching our frighteningly ongoing non-warren web (mostly accidental) nuclear holocaust, director Lucy Walker's documentary is a sobering, worthy call for disarmament.

Smart talking-heads, including Mikhail Gorbachev, Tony Blair, Jimmy Carter and former US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, reveal how everything from powder-puff Cold War willy-waving to a random flock of birds circling for morning flares can have nearly triggered a hellacious red of days.

But there's only so many tapes you can watch stock footage of nuclear detonation – big bangs, mushroom clouds, buildings swept into the void

– while listening to narration by Ben Cassen's Mr. Chicken himself, Gary Oldman, before the underlying message becomes a depressingly inevitable one.

We're all going to die. We're all going to die. We're all going to die. That's the message drummed into our school halls as *Countdown to Zero* recreates how everyone is definitely going to trigger the nuclear apocalypse at some point. Beyond that gloomy thought, it has little else to say. Sure, go to nuclear con, petron the world's congress to reduce their nuclear stockpiles to zero, hope for the best. Absolute no solution, that's the idea. But as a documentary, there's still too much repetition and too few surprises.

What's really missing from Walker's documentary is a big, burning symbol of optimism. Buried in the doomsday anecdotes is a startling story in which Soviet president Boris Yeltsin was faced with a scenario in which he had to push the button to trigger nuclear war. A US attack threat had been detected. *Fateless* had been followed. This was up. But for reasons known only to himself, Yeltsin refused to order

the action. This is a moment of human hope powerful enough to hang on to, but *Countdown to Zero* never reaches for it (Yeltsin isn't interviewed about it).

As worthy an awareness-raiser as Walker's documentary is, it's hard to trailer out without feeling that the entire human race is scrambling a giant *Achilles, Dr. Strangelove*-style, as it plummets on a long, unstoppable journey to impact. We know, again, don't know when, don't know when, but we'll meet again some sunny day. **Joanathon Crocker**

Anticipation. *An Inconvenient Truth* with nuclear

Engagement. We're all going to die, we're all going to die, we're all going to die

In Retrospect. A worthy, important effort – but not a great one

Win Win

Directed by **Tom McCarthy**
 Starring **Paul Giamatti, Amy Ryan, Alex Shaffer**
 Released **May 26**



After *The Snow Year* and *The Vow*, Win Win is the third low-key but heartfelt gem from Tom McCarthy, who continues to document the quiet struggles, small shrillings and gentle revolutions of ordinary American life.

This time around the focus is on Paul Giamatti's Mike Fishery, a struggling small-town lawyer starting a mid-life crisis in the face. When the opportunity to make some extra cash presents itself, Mike impulsively goes bold, enlisting himself as the guardian of a wealthy, single client before snatching him in a retirement home and pocketing a monthly stipend. When the old man's grandson, Kyle (Alex Shaffer), turns up out of the blue, he proves to be a catalyst not just for Mike's lackluster high-school wedding train, but for his life in general. Not before Mike comes painfully close to screwing it up, though.

Giamatti gives another finely calibrated and scantly observed performance in a role that was never likely to scratch him. He's supported by the equally delectable Amy Ryan as his wife, Jackie, and a considerable comic turn from Bob by Casanova as best friend Dugg, who compulsively sits outside his beautiful marital home and watches the builder go in to nail his wife (just one of the many things to like about McCarthy is that he keeps Casanova gently employed).

But it's Alex Shaffer who steals the show, somehow turning teenage transcendence into an eloquent expression of Kyle's deep-seated sense of confusion and betrayal. McCarthy's script avoids all the confounding tropes and clichés of coming-of-age adolescence, suggesting instead that there's a very thin line separating our adult selves from the child inside.

It's fair to question how long McCarthy can continue to assure that postulate even before the

few of diminishing returns kick in. And it's also true to say he's no great stylist with the camera. The right now he's making a tricky govt — the warmly personable comedy of manners — look very easy indeed. *Win Win* is another understated triumph. **Matt Beckstead**

Anticipation. It's Tom McCarthy! You either love him or — like him a lot. **4**

Enjoyment. Honest, insightful, warm and witty. A proper delight. **4**

In Retrospect. McCarthy can keep you smiling for days. **4**

Point Blank

Directed by **Fred Cooney**
 Starring **Gilles Lellouche, Rachidy Zou, Gérard Lannin**
 Released **June 10**



From an explosive opening, *Anything For Her* director Fred Cooney's latest doesn't let up. A nursing assistant, Samuel (Gilles Lellouche), has to help an injured man, Serge (Rachidy Zou), escape from police when in hospital when Serge's heavily pregnant wife Nisha (Eliseo Anson, most recently seen in John Madden's *Run in Snow*) is kidnapped. A shocking murder sends Samuel on the run, suddenly a target for competing forces, much like the protagonist in Guillaume Canet's measurable 2006 thriller *Il y a un*.

Cooney and Cooney are at the forefront of the sort of Hollywoodization of the French film industry portended by Luc Besson since his 1995 outing, *Subway*, all the way through to the Jean-Pierre Jeunet and 2001's *Taken*, on which he was an uncredited producer. Appropriately, one of

Point Blank's key set pieces takes place in the Paris metro. Tipped and tided, as it is, with leopards' stripes, you may even be reminded of John Woo's *Hard Brawl*, albeit without the formidable gunplay.

And some welcome scenes, Lellouche looks like a supple rugby player while Zou is shrewdly charismatic, there's some great casting among the police, too, which serves Zou's more easily racially representative than in English-language films. Chert Perot is particularly noticeable as a Lutherik Balesio-type among the mean strong female leads on the force for him to submit, though there's a very odd subplot about maternal feelings among women officers.

Cooney's only flaw crop is an overcommitment to tie up loose ends with a summariness that may

not play well for an Anglophone audience. As long as that finale doesn't leave a bad taste in the mouth, the greatest compliment you can pay *Point Blank* is that it not only matches Hollywood's best thrillers, it outpaces them. It's that good. **Joana Nalla**

Anticipation. It takes a lot of balls to appropriate this title. **3**

Enjoyment. Into the target. **4**

In Retrospect. Bigger swir. **4**

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HEARTBEATS

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Viva Rival

Directed by **Djo Munga**
 Starring **Paatsha Bay, Mania Mulana, Maja Fortuna**
 Released May 27



Coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and hoping to spearhead a filmmaking movement there, cinematographer *Viva Riva* makes impressive work, but soon hits on too many familiar genre conventions to stand out from the crowd.

After working as a low-level crook in Angola, Riva (Paatsha Bay) makes off with a truckload of petrol, planning to option off his previous cargo in exchange for a small fortune in the lean-dry Congolese capital, Kinshasa. However, word of his deal comes a run, with various parties from colonial state officials to ambitious oligarchs wanting their cut—while Angolan gangster Cassa (Jiles Pomaia) is in hot pursuit, aiming to claim both the petrol and Riva's head.

For his first feature film, writer/director Djo Munga takes a more side glance at the moral poem concerning Congolese society, opting instead to make a propertarian fable, full of sex, violence and nefarious deeds. It is unfortunate, as political issues—as glimpsed in Cassa's venal judgment of Congolese characters, "Maybe you should have remained colored"—takes a backseat to a rather needless exploration of sexuality.

From Riva's stated blood lust, to his rapine trips to the local brothel, sex is seen through an oppressively masculine gaze, with women often portrayed as naked sex objects. Much of the film's explicit sex is based on its more suggested sex scenes—one of which

turns to boil over into heavy, sweaty sensuality, as Riva finds himself enveloped in an egg of women wearing tribal masks, and doused in exotic body-paint. In other hands, the single into the random hedonism of young people could be amusing, but the film doesn't dig beneath Riva's job-to-kill character. These scenes are soon forgotten, though, as the final third turns itself into bloody, convoluted chaos, pushing towards a conclusion that is as thrilling as it is predictable.

Whether *Viva Riva*'s highly watchable, commendable, yet unavowedly conventional quality will suggest a new wave of Congolese cinema is uncertain, but for world cinema violence, at least, it offers the opportunity to cross one more country off the list. **Michael Lesler**

Anticipation: The attraction of the new **3**

Enjoyment: The thrill of the chase **3**

In Retrospect: The charm of the familiar **3**

Insidious

Directed by **James Wan**
 Starring **Patrick Wilson, Rose Byrne, Ty Simpkins**
 Released May 6



If James Wan's debut feature *Saw* was a clever re-examination of the giallo, if *Dead Silence* revived the "killer videotape" fantasy of *The Great Gatsby*, if *Dead Silence* looked back to the reactionary vigilance of the *Death Wish* films, then his latest work, *Insidious*, shows that he has not lost his love for knowing genre psychic.

The short release here is Mike Flanagan's 1982 *Polygraph*, as Wan tells the story of a family feared upside down when one of the children becomes haunted by spirits from the other side. Yet the familiar premise is greatly confounded by the sheer number of other filmic allusions permeated to intrude upon the narrative.

The *Exorcist*, *The Shining*, *Greasy Me* is *Well*, *Powerless Ancestry*, set to introduce the more extreme likes of 1973's *Paranoid* or 1980's *The Bad Boy*, as Wan bends to with references to rapid succession, the constructed reality of his film starts to shift and reel

before our eyes. "You're going to see a lot of things you don't understand," warns medium Blue Reiner (Lan Skay), movements before the door a weird gas mask is set for its making contact with the spirit world. She is not wrong—but the post-modern sustainability of Wan's images is owed to their delectable effect.

Similarly, by leaving unanswered a series of suggested questions, Wan bedevils his viewers with uncertainty. What is the *exorcist* house that caused the mother, Renee (Rose Byrne), to have a breakdown? What other adult women possess with an unfettered monkey and human mind to match those of her young son? These odd details may go precisely nowhere, but they form part of the film's texture of creepy unease.

Some horrors delve into society's political realities, others converse with uncomfortable home truths, while still others name the father, more neglected members of the viewer's unconscious.

Really, *Insidious* does none of these, as it's too busy scoring the terms out of its hapless, bewildered victims. When the supernatural genre just says boo, you'd jump all right—and it is easy enough as its message: of the vacancy to have you laughing to *Anne Dorel*.

Anticipation: Forget the low reputation of the sequels—*Saw* was good **3**

Enjoyment: Matches its audience with an unshingled silliness **4**

In Retrospect: The spirit of Sam Raimi returns **4**



Incendies

Directed by **Denis Villeneuve**

Starring **Lohana Azeul, Méliane Dubreuil-Poulin, Maxime Gaudette**

Released **June 24**

When the feeling's gone and you can't go on, it's tragedy. *Incendies* were the last Green inches long, and you can bet your life that if *Incendies* had been a musical, that shower of '70s classic would have been an overpowering theme tune.

Instead, *Incendies* (I hear it's French) is a grim, moving drama that plays it straight. Canadian twins Jeanne (Méliane Dubreuil-Poulin) and Simon (Maxime Gaudette) have just lost their mother. In her will, Nawal (Lohana Azeul) leaves her children two letters: one for the father they believe is dead, the order for a brother they didn't even know they had.

It's Nawal's doing with that these letters be delivered by Jeanne and Simon, who set out on a seemingly impossible mission to the Middle East in search of their mom. Meanwhile, the twins' minds are tortured with the story of their mother's origins — those devastating events that shaped her into the distant, troubled woman her children grew up with.

Set against the backdrop of a fictional — but devastatingly familiar — civil war, *Incendies* delves in massive themes, tackling them on a wrenchingly intimate scale. While evocative images of broken

buildings and bloodied-out buses strike the anti-war themes, it's Belgian actress Azeul who brings the brightest. As a mother who's suffered overpowering trauma — and been unable to explain it to those closest to her — Azeul is a revelation. She plays both the younger and older versions of her character, and drives the narrative with a fiery passion, as lost every trembling leg, every pang of uncertainty as Nawal pushes from one disaster to another.

True, the film's second half loses energy without her. As the story shifts to focus on her children's increasingly bizarre expedition, the pacing begins to slow. But in place of Nawal's dramatic hook story emerges a far more disturbing exploration of her children's own origins. As the twins learn truth after devastating truth about Nawal's tragic upbringings, their own tale is afforded depth and detail.

It's a downer, to be sure. Credit to director Denis Villeneuve as well, then, who ensures that his slowly unfolding mystery is carefully measured out, and lifted by terrific performances across the board. The result is a slowly absorbing, riveting, gut-wrenching and intimate film that *Incendies* never falls into the trap of becoming just another movie about the futility of war, refusing to

comment on the heartbreak of conflict, while letting its sporting content speak loudly for itself.

Only the film's final nuclear punch revelation threatens the melodrama barometer, albeit as it does on really unfortunate coincidence for its power. By then, though, you'll be too wrapped up in Nawal's narrative to really mind. As tragedy goes, it's hard to hear — but it's definitely worth it. **Josh Winkler**

Anticipation: Flipped in Competition at Cannes and has Roger Ebert's backing. Must be good, then. **4**

Enjoyment: Harrowing, beautiful and disturbing, though the second hour drags. **4**

In Retrospect: Elemental and expertly directed, Nawal's story haunts long after the credits have rolled. **4**

Jesse Eisenberg

Just Awkward

Interview by Neil Fournell

Select Filmography
Jesse Eisenberg

The Social Network (2010)

Moly Rollers (2010)

Solitary Man (2009)

Zombieland (2009)

Adventureland (2009)

The Education of Charlie Banks (2007)

The Lying Wake (2007)

The Squid and the Whale (2005)

Roger Dodge (2002)

Labeling Jesse Eisenberg "awkward" feels a little like calling geophysics "mugy," while undeniably true, it's just a little unnecessary. Being in the nondescript Paramount offices of a PR company the Saturday before the *KAPPA*ts, Eisenberg is polite, funny, extremely modest but pitiless (as a mathematician on a writing machine. It's not that he's rude; just a little, well, awkward).

Efficient: Congratulations on all the awards. How are you feeling about all that stuff?
Eisenberg: Well, it's very nice. But I imagine that it's a temporary experience to do with a single movie... I look forward to never having it again.

In lots of your films — *The Squid and the Whale*, *Adventureland*, *The Social Network*, *Moly Rollers* — you've played fairly unlikable characters that at the same time are interesting and even charming. Are you worried that the new profile means you're going to have to play nice guys from now on?

I never really think of a character as likable or not likable. In the same way that a person doesn't think of themselves as likable or not likable. You try to think of a role inside out. For instance, with a film like *The Social Network*, my director does things that are harmful to other characters. That may make him less likable in movie terms, but for me as the actor I always knew why he was doing those things and why he would make those decisions. They're all the levers of their own story.

In both *The Social Network* and *Moly Rollers* you're playing characters based on real people. That can come with big pitfalls: what made you take on those roles?

Luckily, I didn't experience the pitfall, which is when your potential is compared to the real person. Even with someone like Mark Zuckerberg, who is in the public eye and my contemporary, I was asked to create a character, not do an impersonation. In *Moly Rollers* I was really

playing a combination of a few people who no one really knows. The advantages are far greater. It's inspiring to learn about a person's life and to think how you can bring that life to a character. So, for example, for *Moly Rollers* I read about how Hasidic Jews wouldn't touch or shake hands with a woman. That made me think about how, as a Hasidic Jew, you would feel when you saw a woman walking down the street. Maybe you would feel unconsciously attracted but also guilty.

You're 26. How have you got so far so quickly?
A lot of it is luck. I know fast-food actors with the same skill set as mine that aren't working in anything that we would have seen. I mean, I've been in a lot of things that no one's ever seen. Or if they've seen them no one's ever liked them.

Have you got any advice for other young actors? There are some great advantages to being as a really big movie; you can make a living from it, it offers you great opportunities and maybe the movie itself is good. But if you like the performance side of acting, as opposed to the publicity part, then you should want to do it as an actor, not as a star.

With something like *The Squid and the Whale*, reactions were often very different depending on your individual circumstances — like, if your parents had split or not. Are you expecting a similarly mixed response to *Moly Rollers*?

After *The Squid and the Whale* came out I got approached by a lot of people whose parents had divorced, who wanted to tell me how they identified with my character. It was nice, although my parents are still married so I couldn't really relate. In *Moly Rollers*, the personal reactions have come from people who have dealings with Hasidic Jews but are not Hasidic themselves. They've been really interesting. Hasidic Jews in states where centers like London and New York are integrated into the world, but also very foreign. You know, although I

ride the subway with them every day, they live in a house that I'll never enter; they go to a temple that I would never be allowed inside. And yet we have the same background in many ways, and the same rhetorical apparatus.

Is it true that you're making a sequel to *Zombieland*?
No. They're writing the script right now but I haven't seen it and I suspect that the longer we wait, the less relevant it will be. I mean, all the stars would love to do it and the director would love to do it but I'm not sure what's happening.

In Bill Murray the coolest guy in Hollywood?
Yeah, he's very funny. I've been to a couple of smooch ceremonies recently and he's made some hysterical speeches. So, yes, I suspect he would take the role that you bestow upon him.

Talking of being, is it true that your mother is a clown? Did you have quite a creative, performing background?

My mother was a birthday party clown and my father is a professor in a university. So they understand and support the arts. That provided a nice backdrop for me. We lived in the suburbs of New Jersey and I didn't have a good feeling in my school, so the entertainment world of New York was very alluring. When I was 14 years old I was old enough to do it. I was very attracted to theater and movies but at the same time there was this dark side, people taking advantage of each other, and I was slightly repelled by that.

You've recently been described as the acceptable face of geek Hollywood. Are you happy with that, or are you going to do a massive action film now to counteract it?

I mean, I haven't accepted that title. I just don't think it really sticks. But, you know, thank you for it, I guess.

Check out the full transcript online in June.



Holy Rollers

Directed by Kevin Asch

Starring Jesse Eisenberg, Justin Bartha, Jason Fuchs

Released May 13

It is not often that you see a drug dealer dressed as Donatello. Or Fox. Donatello. Or Fox, that is, as transmuted by Wes Anderson. But Sam Gold, the semi-anti-hero of *Holy Rollers* manages just that, to buy and sell drugs in a maroon-brown candyland suit while smoking white Nikos.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. *Holy Rollers* is an independent film written by Antonio Maza, directed by Kevin Asch, starring Jesse Eisenberg (recently seen as Mark Zuckerberg in *The Social Network*) and Jason Bartha (aka Dong from *The Hot Chick*). It's a broad comedy. Eisenberg's character is an amalgamation of several different cell heard on the true story of a Hispanic drug-dealing cell heard in New Jersey, which imported ecstasy from the Netherlands during the 1980s.

Now, if that sounds like the most hipster idea for a movie you've ever heard — drugs plus Orthodox religion plus sex plus New York — then don't worry, you don't have to live in a converted warehouse to 'get' it. The most engaging parts of the film, in fact, are the relationships between Gold (Eisenberg) his father-in-law father (played by Mark Zuckerman) and his street-smart neighbor Leon Zimmerman (Jason Fuchs). In the hierarchical Hispanic community,

there is genuine affection between father and son, laughably ambitious between Sam and Leon, and childlike rebellion in the way the former watches porn through the latter's window.

The outline for the film's real action, however, comes at the chain-smoking, cursing, dirty-shedding home of Leon's overbearing older brother Israel (Bartha). It is Israel who hoodwinks Sam and Leon into smuggling their first stash of ecstasy into America. It is Israel who introduces Sam to the Jewish dealer, Jackie, and his porous blonde girlfriend Rachel. It is Israel who slowly introduces his naive young neighbor to a Jewish underworld where people of Orthodox twenty-something become a lion for one of the shakiest, if not the least, drug routes in the western world.

If that all sounds rather like the film version of your school's anti-drug lesson — *Roller Madras* for the MTV generation — then perhaps we're doing it a disservice. Sam's drug trafficking certainly does bring him money, fun and exposure. He goes to clubs, he makes friends, he breaks away from his family's expectations and he gets that sweet candyland sun you've already heard about. Not to mention the white Nikos.

As it is often the case with films based on real events, however, the plot doesn't go any further than the three-line synopsis that implies. *Holy Rollers* is a film about the loss of innocence. Or perhaps — less suggesting something valued and taken away — that is more accurately a film about a revolution against innocence and the violence it leaves behind.

The performances are good, some of the dialogue is clever and snappy, the depictions of being high are bad (but then they always are) and the movie is truly compelling. If you don't really go beyond 'yudy' **Neil Pezall**

Anticipation. Mark Zuckerberg smuggled ecstasy in his ringlets? Or yyy?

Enjoyment. Ecstasy-smuggling Orthodox drug drama. It does exactly what it says on the tin.

In Retrospect. You'll want to Google the hell out of this 'true story'



Potiche

Directed by **François Ozon**

Starring **Catherine Deneuve, Gérard Philipe, Fabrice Lucchini**

Released **June 17**

Potiche's, quite fittingly, a French term for a trophy wife. Potage because in many ways, Catherine Deneuve has been a trophy actress—an ornament of beauty and glamour on which to hang a film. François Ozon's latest is a story centered on the emancipation and political awakening of a housewife in 1970s France and differs from last year's *The Refuge* in just about every respect. Here, we're served a feast with copious amounts of hands. The lightness, however, plays counterpoint to serious themes which culminate in a deeply satirical denouement.

The fluidly opening credit sequence features one of France's most iconic actresses dressed in a girlish and trinket-strewn gown, striding through the grounds of her idyllic country gîte, acknowledging the hush, the square, the flagging cobble, while crapping to get down girlie suggestions for her poetry. Is this a case of Gacy On Gacy?

Despite the material trappings of wealth, Suzanne Pailot (Deneuve) makes her life in empty—the reality describes herself in the "queen of kitchen appliances." Her husband Robert, played to sparkling perfection by Fabrice Lucchini, is an aggressive capitalist with a dandyman attitude to his employees and his own family.

The union demands better pay, an eight-hour working day, more holidays and a proper toilet—not just a "Turkish-style" hole in the ground. These satapannams and the subsequent upsurge allow Madame Pailot to become the patronizing, but well-meaning, new manager. Her light touch brings about coded releases and improved productivity. Naturally her husband sees this as an attempt to usurp his position as the boss of everybody.

Potiche is the kind of film where communism and capitalism are equal targets for mockery. It isn't Ozon re-visioning the Days Without Gangs. And it's not Godard's *Two or Three*, no matter the set up. There is, however, a vague staking that the director is pointing to a moment in western history where, perhaps, Pfitter campaigns began to outweigh serious debate and politics became a popularity contest.

Closing the film with a musical number in which Madame Pailot sings about becoming the mother of France is stirring, and much darker than it may at first appear. *Potiche* is satire masquerading as broad comedy.

Suzanne Pailot is another in a long line of strong, complex women in Ozon's work. Gérard Philipe is on far comic form as the local

commune mayor, Edouard, who had a Lady Chatterfield-style affair with Suzanne back in the day. Every moment of screen time they share is an utter delight, at least their dance scene.

But it's Deneuve who stands in the spotlight, giving a winning performance as a woman whose empowerment and political aims might not be as benign as first thought. Towards the end, a disgruntled Mayor Babou walks away from a television, once filming his new political rival, telling them he wants no part of her "personality cult." There's real sting to this water-tale. **Maryn Canerio**

Anticipation. Deneuve reunited with Depardieu in a new Ozon film. Should be great.

4

Enjoyment. Casey on Ozon?

4

In Retrospect. A warm-hearted story of a woman's rise in a man's world before a biting satire.

4

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Mammuth

Directed by **Benoît Delépine**,
Gustave de Kervern
Starring **Gérard Depardieu**,
Yolande Moreau, **Isabelle Adjani**
Released **June 3**



Directors Benoît Delépine and Gustave de Kervern speculate in bleak, desolate black comedies about the plight of the cinema worker. In *Mammuth*, Serge (Gérard Depardieu) faces a grim retirement saving his pension and disposing his wife with his dodgy DIY skills. It's almost too much for him when he's forced to get on his motorbike and trundle around the countryside in an effort to locate the missing work papers that will help level up his meager pension. Not much occurs on the journey: some of his old friends are nobody runs, others have changed hands. Along the way he's reunited with an ex-girl who makes him run out of broken dolls.

On paper, this looks like an improvement on the duo's previous outing, his-and-her average comedy *Lesons-Michel*. It seems to promise greater depth and seriousness, more maturity, more focus. But no. While *Lesons-Michel* had plenty of love, it also had its

cray bags. By contrast, *Mammuth* stumbles through a number of loosely strung vignettes with all the pace of a Zimex limo in low gear.

Delépine and de Kervern have clearly entered a phase of dismantling cinema with their pot-throne of blink lore, proletarian banality and generic decay. But what really makes this film schizoid is Serge. He's completely unrecognizable with the past's previous pretentious Louie — the same shaggy, longer chin, more and sparser. Every now and then, in a last attempt to give him dimension, a phantom dead girlfriend in the guise of Isabelle Adjani pops up, but that just makes you wish you were watching an Isabelle Adjani movie.

There's no discernible social agenda either, not unless you count a land of cultural tourism that pretends the working classes are livable grotesques on a par with garden gnomes. The film's answer to

Serge's woes is for him to smoke some weed with his golfed niece and think about taking up verse. Become a poet? We'd love to hear Delépine and de Kervern offering that advice outside the local job center. **Johan White**

Anticipation: A read movie with Gérard Depardieu? **2**

Enjoyment: This takes on the portails of retirement in toothless snivel. **2**

In Retrospect: Make a note of the names Delépine and de Kervern. That way you can avoid them in future. **1**

Angels of Evil

Directed by **Michelle Placido**
Starring **Kim Rossi Stuart**,
Filippo Toso, **Marta Blatter**
Released **May 27**



If the son of a gangster hopes to show us audience with images of pain, violence pulled right over faces, and back rates stuffed at speed into human skulls, then this film delivers. Renato Villamura (played by Kim Rossi Stuart, who is also one of the film's co-writers) may be cheeky and good-looking, but he's as tough as they come — he has spent 34 of his 58 years in jail — and over the course of the film we see him swallow nails, flesh his own chest, and ask someone to stab him. But despite the sensational promise of these scenes, Villamura's run through the 1970s criminal underworld of Milan isn't protected, mediocre and in most aspects unexceptional.

The one lesson of his story that stands out is the fact that he managed to reach celebrity status, exposing broken hearts and finding love as a pro-gangster for Milan's teenagers, with hundreds of girls writing him love letters every day. It's an outrageous phenomenon but one that creates eerily foreshadowed in the film. Unlike *Reservoir Dogs*, the director's previous foray into the world of crime, Michelle Placido has impressively chosen not to weave any social or historical context into this story (other than through the use of cheapened musical and chocolate clothing), therefore isolating Villamura's tale and preventing us from gaining any real insight into his life, which is surely the real aim of a biopic.

The film's only attempt to get under Villamura's skin comes in the form of today we live: "I'm not evil, I just have a more pronounced dark side." It's not passed that *Angels of Evil* never escapes its generic roots. Characters drift in and out of the story with no real impact, the plotting becomes increasingly convoluted, and the pace gradually subdues Michelle Placido has barely used some startling sound design and various film angles in order to try and maintain our interest, but they do little to bring real drama to the story. This film works as a straight-up gang-and-money flick, but its clichés fail to arrive as in the myth that is the *Angel of Evil*. **Chris Oakley**

Anticipation: Guns, money and hot Italians in hot Italian clothes. **3**

Enjoyment: Guns, money and hot Italians in hot Italian clothes. **2**

In Retrospect: Guns, money and hot Italians in hot Italian clothes. **2**

Julia's Eyes

Directed by **Guillermo Morales**
 Starring **Belen Rueda, Lina Hama, Pablo Dargatzis**
 Released May 28



Since Rafael and Dell began playing tricks on the eye in *Un Ojo Judío*, the filmmaker's predilection for poking eyeballs has provided the better movie with one of its more gory moments. But what if you found out you were about to lose your sight and there was nothing you could do about it?

Lina has one sister, who has recently been found hanging from a rope in the basement. Julia (Belen Rueda) suffers from a degenerative eye disease that will eventually render her completely blind. As if this isn't bad enough, she is also tormented by the disturbing realization that she is being watched by a madman. Growing darker by the day, Julia desperately investigates the mysterious murder of her sister, sensing that the terrible man in the shadows is growing closer, too.

From the creepy crevices looking in the basement to the eerily long husband in the bedchamber, everyone is a suspect. As the mystery turns

and turns again, director Guillermo Morales rarely lets the source material, smartly keeping his eyeball-bashing villain hidden until the final twist.

While hesitantly upholding the psychological horror cliché that audiences love to hate (protagonist leading lady, lonely Peruvian aunt, and a gulch or two of blood and guts) Morales also handles the chilling prospect of going blind as a highly original way.

Julia's Eyes is often shot from the point of view of the murderer, leaving us to wonder if in the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king, whose does the terrible man stand? This tension culminates in an impressive sequence in which the blinding flash of an antique camera's light bulb.

Both the claustrophobic lighting and the skillfully limited choice of blinders serve to restrain and lend the film a disturbingly uncomfortable finish. Although the plot may often veer off into the realm of the

implausible, and Julia's logic system on the absurd, this is a film that will leave you clapping greedily in your seat, your spine and your spectacles. **Zoe Miller**

Anticipation. The Guillermo del Toro stamp of approval is a good omen

3

Engagement. The hanging woman in the basement? Not such a good omen. This is edge-of-the-seat viewing from start to finish.

4

In Retrospect. You'll be checking your blind spots on the way home

4

Outside the Law

Directed by **Rachid Bouchareb**
 Starring **Jamel Debbouze, Rachid Yek, Sami Bouajifa**
 Release date May 8



Rachid Bouchareb's films are spouts of justice. *Days of Glory* raged at the French treatment of Algerian soldiers during the Second World War, while *London River*, set in Pimlico Park in the days following the 9/9 bombings, accused antiquity at a poisoned French ignorance of Islamism while ignoring the questions asked of the religion by its western followers.

In *Outside the Law*—a historical epic of the struggle for Algerian independence—Bouchareb is once again trying to weave character studies into actual headlines. It's a noble pursuit hobbled by the sleazy clap on his shoulder, a clap that appears to weigh heavier with each film.

Bouchareb, French of Algerian descent, trades in righteous anti-colonialism, a pro-entirement, anti-western sentiment which, while earning him some points from the post-9/11, makes for dreary, self-righteous, politically explosive and monotonously winning cinema.

The prologue of this film sets in Algeria, barely freshly removed from their home by sites of French violence. We are then launched 20 years forward. As France celebrates the surrender of Nazi Germany, powerful Algerian nationalist marshals in Saudi Arabia including the brothers we meet in the first scene—are brutally attacked by French soldiers. These are

the film statements of someone so convinced of their cause they can only shout about it, and no one likes to be shouted at.

From this event, the brothers are splintered, only to recombine in early adulthood in a shanty town on the edge of Paris. From there, each signs up to the National Liberation Front, working their family lives and being 'outside the law', as they descend further into violence in the name of their struggle.

Some of the instichronous touches, but in French come and go, usually concerning sexual intrigue from thinly sketched female characters. Bouchareb chooses to turn over the most significant aspects of the story to just happen, from one scene to the next. Though a 134-minute film, the hard questions are again ignored. **Tom Sposaro**

Anticipation. Bouchareb's back with more of the same

2

Engagement. A boring, didactic manipulation of history

1

In Retrospect. We await his return of Colonel Gaddafi

1



Heartbeats

Directed by **Xavier Dolan**
 Starring **Xavier Dolan, Monia Chokri, Niels Schneider**
 Released **May 27**

Two-year-old filmmaker Xavier Dolan writes, directs, produces and stars in *Heartbeats*—an ebulliently lecherous romantic drama guaranteed to bolster his standing with hipster mag heads and fashion dickheads. Shot through with the sort of busy late-summer vibe that suggests a romantic-comedy Dolan is still too willing to abandon, *Heartbeats* details an awkward love triangle in which best friends Mace (Monia Chokri) and Franck (Dolan) find themselves at odds over early-blossomed Adèle Nicolas (Niels Schneider). The fact that Nicolas is a deep-eyed post-teen doesn't stop either of them engaging in a game of romantic one-upmanship before realizing that some things are more important than sex. This pseudo-profound teen drama is a bit of a bore for anybody who's already figured that out. **Matt Beckhaus 3 2 2**



Life, Above All

Directed by **Oliver Schenck**
 Starring **Khematoza Manyika, Kennetha Makhanyane, Harriet Leshabe**
 Released **May 27**

Recipient of a standing ovation, last year's Cannes Film Festival, Oliver Schenck's *Life, Above All* is an unmercifully affecting South African AIDS drama that is let down by a touch of shamelessly manipulative sentimentality. It's underpinned by a heartwarming performance from first-time screen Khematoza Manyika as one of the nation's victims of the country's AIDS epidemic—a young girl tainted by the shame of her mother's illness and the cruel hypocrisy of her neighbors' Christian charity. Struggling to cope with the gaping fissure that has opened up in her life, she also has to deal with a best friend turning to prostitution and a desperately vulnerable younger brother. Manyika effectively conveys the franchise emotional consequences of Mandela's presidency, but Schenck is far too eager to drag his audience to tears and demand that they weep. **Matt Beckhaus 3 3 2**



Jig

Directed by **Sue Byrne**
 Released **May 6**

A museum-style documentary, *Jig* explores the personal journeys of a number of young competitors in the year leading up to the 2009 World Irish Dancing Championships. Director Sue Byrne digs into the lifestyle and personal agony that the competitors, their tutors and their parents invest in their meager efforts to achieve a no-money first place position in the finals. Few would imagine a documentary shadowing a little-known Irish dance competition could hook you as or enable you to relate to the dancers themselves, but *Jig* is an eye-opening window on the relentless dedication of these involved in the sport. It offers an inside look into a sport to which the mainstream world has never been exposed, revealing the implacable specter of Irish dancing, a constantly evolving and growing pursuit. **Giles Butler 1 3 3**



My Dog Tulip

Directed by **Paul Fierlinger, Sandra Fierlinger**
 Starring **Christopher Plummer, Lynn Collins, Isabelle Huppert**
 Released **May 6**

Man's ongoing love affair with the breed has probably provided more to the way of cinematic stories than his love affair with his own species. *My Dog Tulip*. Working very much for the under team, Paul and Sandra Fierlinger have brought JK Aschler's memoir of a life shared with a nervous German Shepherd to the screen as a disarmingly honest but beautifully rendered animation. It is narrated by Christopher Plummer as a wary-smiling single man who takes on a dog for companionship and develops a deep respect and compassion for the beast. From chaotic reminiscences on Tulip's trials to a thought-provoking narrative strand about Aschler's work for Tulip to experience a full life, there's greater affection and intimacy in this story. The animation was made by hand on a computer, and the result is a painterly aesthetic that suits the unreliability of the old couple it depicts. **Laura Bushell 2 3 4**



Risen

Directed by *Neil Jones*

Starring *Shawn Brannon, John Noble and Erik Morales*

Released *May 11*

The life of Marvinen Tybil born Howard "With Wizard" Wintone, a man who secured the WBC World Featherweight Championship in 1968 despite having lost the tips of several fingers in an industrial accident, is worked over in this biopic. In order to wrap into Wintone's boots, actor Shawn Brannon trained for five years with Wintone's real-life sparring partner Don Jones, resulting in some undeniably impressive fight scenes. We're not talking choreographed Rocky-style slug fests but intense, lightning-fast toe-ups that leave you with a stinging taste of the sweat, blood and toil that make up the sweet science. However, the loose script and non-existent character development outside of the ring makes it as unbalanced as many of Wintone's punch-drunk opponents, and ultimately it falls down just as fast. **Ed Andrews 3/2**



Fire in Babylon

Directed by *Steven Riley*

Released *May 26*

Few in *Babylon* began in Australia in 1975 where the West Indian cricket team, forced to endure some pretty blatant racism from the home crowd, lost the test series 5-1. A year later, on their '76 tour of England, the 'Indians' somehow "got their act together, finding a formidable four-man pace unit and, as Sir Richards, one of the most fearless and destructive batsmen the sport has ever seen. Director Steven Riley films cricket through a prism of black power and resistance, showing the West Indians' cultural journey through a remarkable period of globalism, where immigrants were beginning to settle in London's boroughs, the US Civil Rights Movement was inspiring change and most people were hearing Bob Marley sing "Get Up, Stand Up" for the first time. Shot with warmth, energy and a heartiness that is wholly fitting of its subject, this is a fitting salute to the ideal of our love. **Tom Szymura 3/4**



Amreeka

Directed by *Cherise Dallas*

Starring *Nirvana Foner, Mather Austin, Rita Shomehi*

Released *May 11*

American the Arabic word for "America" opens with gritty scenes of unscrupulous businessmen in the Palestinian territories before quickly switching to a strange, trip-comic culture-clash where clumsy, kind and generous Mona and her misbegotten teenage son Fadi are paired against the cruel, indifferent oppressor of a suburban America growing up for the 1003 versions of Iraq. As Mona struggles to hold down a nine-to-five job, the "PCB" flesh off the heart's tender plot that Fadi is treated with at school isn't less, predictably, to rebel. In an attempt to retain momentum, the film lurches away from comic-book realism towards post-de-dote melodrama. But such over-saturation is compensated by a gentleness to the human desire to persevere and a keen eye for emotional nuance. **Tom Szymura 3/2**



Life in a Day

Directed by *Kevin Macdonald*

Starring *Cindy Bare, Matthew Evans, Garyn Whittier*

Released *June 17*

A first-aid, non-narrative treasury with a decidedly positive outlook makes *Life in a Day* a movement leap through the world as seen through the eyes of strangers. Conceived by Google and L&O to celebrate YouTube's fifth birthday with uncommissioned footage edited under the guidance of director Kevin Macdonald and producer Ridley Scott, it charts the events of Saturday July 24, 2010, as seen through countless cameras from 292 countries. We witness everything from the icy surges of lands (human and gaffe), to the sad reality of death in cow's slaughter in Romania and horrific, somehow both too slow and too quick, and the unsurpassable instant for survival in two-time cancer victim whose family, as their suffering, has been "let free from fear." When a 95-minute film body documents and offers you London's King's Day, you've got something accurate and something very special indeed. **Georgia Hobbs 3/4**

CHAPTER 5 IN
WHICH WE EXPLORE
THE MESMERISING
MINUTIAE OF
MOVIE CULTURE

THE **Back Section** 33



JÖRG TITTEL OFFERS A POLEMICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE MOVIE INDUSTRY'S FAVOURITE NEW BUZZWORD – TRANSMEDIA.

TRANSMEDIAOCRITY

by JÖRG TITTEL



ron platform. Multipatform. Transmedia. When I first used these words, or similar, in LA, film and game executives, agents and producers probably thought I was trying to make cross-grader pun. I might as well have been dressed in drag, sporting high platform shoes alongside my straggly beard. That's how they were looking at me.

A decade later, those words are on the tip of those same people's tongues. One can barely escape a single press release, quarterly statement or customer briefing without getting caught in the trans-buzzword crossfire. The future is now, they say, the world of entertainment is converging. We are all one.

Transfusion: the music has collapsed, the DVD market is on its last legs, movie studios have to risk their own cash on their sequels and 50p Angry Birds superfranchise some of the biggest console blockbusters. It's time to break out. To find the new winning formula.

Despite the enhanced marketing vocabulary, not much has changed – at least not for the better. Hollywood has not become more innovative, except perhaps in the way middle men and women purely their salaries to their shareholders. As the SCREAM poster

(the 'T' from the last one conspicuously upgraded) so aptly says, 'New decade. New rules.' But it's the same old shit – sequels, sequels, sequels, clones.

But there's a new breed of suits: the non-videogame videogame gnomes. Hollywood's idea of transmedia made easy. Picture this path: 'Dwayne swappers with guns, the soundtrack is Björk meets Black-108, the non-sapped straight from videogames.' Sucker Punch was born. Kids would love it. Not. The result was an interperson abomination. Rebecca Black Swan. Google it. Someone already made a mashup.



In the process of trying to mimic games, movies forget to tell stories. Christopher Nolan's Inception is perhaps the most stylish of its kind (granted, Miyazaki got there at deep into levels before levels in Super Mario Bros, but there's a different discussion), but you have to admit: an honest story with living, breathing characters is hard to detect. Instead, suddenly, after much ado, the game's over. And you never even got to see the jigsaw.



Movies have become games you can't play. Games have become movies you can't watch. New decade. New rules. Everyone loses. I believe that the first true examples of 'transmedia' will happen on an indie level. I wouldn't be surprised if - or rather hope that - non-conformist visionaries like Wesley Hurvay, artists who may feel equally at home in poetry, prose, opera, fiction and documentary filmmaking (now in IMAX 3D), will approach it right as artists willing to go to all lengths to tell their stories, to spread their ideas, to engage and reach new audiences instead of targeting underspending consumers.



While Hollywood bungs its overfired agents the vicious middle ground, new and exciting projects that exist across film, games, the web and beyond are bound to come out of nowhere.

Perhaps my upcoming 'transmedia' project, a feature length period drama based on historical events and starring a largely black cast will be among them. We've been developing a game

with Johnny Two Shoes, known to some for their charming iPhone and iPad hit *Flunderland*. We've taken a poetic aspect of this story, turned it on its head and distilled it into gameplay. It's not a high concept piece, nor does it reference *Halo*. Proceeds from the game will finance the film as well as help the cherry close to the film's heart. I hope people will love our creative voyage.

Choose platform. Multisplatform. Transmedia. They don't have to be creepy sales terms. And they can't be originated by unconscious corporations. It all boils down to the right creative people who generously and generously share in a common vision, and who are passionate about exploring it across different mediums. Audiences will follow.

MOBY



INTERVIEW BY [LOU LADYMAN](#)

THE ART OF THE SELF-MADE FILMMAKER BY MICHAEL MOSELEY

Digits becoming ubiquitous as the posterboy of '90s electro-pop, Moby is just as at home shooting film in the suburbs of his hometown of New York as he is spinning discs before a sea of strangers. *11:11* is down with the musician recently to chat about his latest project, *Destroyed*, an independently released experimental album and photo book that serves audiences as an intimate behind-the-scenes odyssey encompassing the unseen side of touring.

Moby: That's right, I grew up in this strange family where everyone was a visual artist, my mother was a painter, my uncle was a photographer, my other uncle was a sculptor, my grandmother was a watercolorist. So I grew up in this environment where everybody made stuff. And when I was in high school I worked at the *AV* department, which is the most quantitatively nerdy thing you can do, where we had access to these amazing low-rez video cameras. Unfortunately I don't have any of those early films anymore.

About 10 years ago I've still got all my old film cameras, but it's hard to go back to them. It's the same with most photographers I know, they'll shoot with film until the bitter end and then finally make the switch to digital and never touch film again. As much as I love film, the benefits of digital are just too many to rarely going back.

Well, although the book was largely shot on portable cameras. I have a nice digital camera, a Canon SD Mix II, but it's a big SLR camera with a big lens and you can't really be spontaneous with it.

Exactly, whereas you can be so much more spontaneous with a point and shoot camera. I felt like, in making this book, even though I liked the resolution that you get from using the bigger camera, I liked the spontaneity you can get with a smaller camera.

Part of it did. All my life I've just wanted to take pictures of things, but I guess there was that realization about 10 years ago, when I started shooting digitally, that you could shoot anything and it didn't cost anything. There was no huge commitment to what you were shooting. And part of it is that I don't like touring - I'm not complaining about it, because there's nothing worse than a professional musician complaining about having to tour - but I still don't like it very much. So I wanted to document touring to make the actual experience a more interesting one for me, but also to put it out in the world and get back a better understanding of it. It's the nature of personal, subjective art that you have a better perspective and understanding of yourself once you've put it out there into the world and seen how people respond to what you've done.

What for Moby was the first thing that I put out completely independently. With no commercial audience I could do whatever I wanted, so for the first angle I got David Lynch to direct a video that couldn't get played on TV and I released it for free. It was a celebration of my rediscovered independence as an artist.

I would have been able to pursue them, but there would have been restrictions. For one rule, I asked my friend Jessica Dambeck to shoot wherever she wanted and she came back with a film of her friend shooting heroin in a public bathroom. No major label would've accepted that. Commercial media is based around the idea that the ends determine the means, but I really like the idea of focusing on the means. The process of making something should be interesting. It's the same with making a record. I want to enjoy the process of making it, put it out, and not be too concerned with what happens.

DVDS

WORDS BY JOEL FERRIS, ANTON BYRLE, GUY BOUTIN, JEFF F. BRIDGEMAN, ROBERT JACKSON, DUM MEYNHOFF, OLIVER SMITH

MAY 2 THE GRIM REAPER (1962)

DIRECTED BY BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

A prostitute is killed in a Roman park. The police find and question each of the people present that night. Each struggles for an alibi. One is the killer. Bertolucci was 20 when he made this classic melodrama. Such bold simplicity, with characters perpetually clutched, this is telling proof of his authorial ability to communicate his hot inner dreams. **B+**

MAMMA ROMA (1962)

DIRECTED BY PIETRO PAOLINI

Mamma Roma (Rina Moretti), a down-at-heel prostitute, is reunited with her 10-year-old son Mario. The event is better life for them both, but he's already beginning to chafe at the rules. Moretti is an case of neo-realism. She has a son like a Roman rule and wears her emotions unconsciously, while Paolini — who worked for both Bertolucci and Fellini — exhibits a free-wheeling cinematic style with some truly beautiful long takes. **B+**

IL POSTO (1961)

DIRECTED BY EDMANNO OLMI

Staying with, but also updating, the Marxist concerns of Italian neo-realism, *Il Posto* casts two shy, suburban youths who must while waiting "a job for life" in a Milanese corporation. They must pass a bizarre screening process before meeting in terms with all manner of strange enemies in this dead-end office. Olmi's subversive style juxtaposes the quiet alienation of his characters' working lives — a vision of alienation that would make Chaplin proud. **B+**

MAY 9 WAITING FOR SUPERMAN (2010)

DIRECTED BY DAVIS GUGGENHEIM

Davis Guggenheim made waves in the US by following a handful of promising students through a public education system that inhibits, rather than encourages, autodidacticism. This indictment of "drop-out factories" and "standardized education" assumes a cheery approach that, at times, plays hide-and-seek with its softness. It's well-intentioned, but unwilling to acknowledge its own flaws. **B-**

PRAISE (1998)

DIRECTED BY JOHN CURRAN

This feature never earned the glory of attention as its authors began disappearing from sight — maybe due to distributor Jokers. Graham (Peter Dinklage), a chance-meeting alcoholic with a taste for heroin, meets Cynthia (Suzie Taelor), a sex and substance addict who possibly represents this hedonist era from across. As she is killed, praise is either less, this is movie's gutter poetry. **B-**

UPSIDE DOWN: THE CREATION RECORDS STORY (2011)

DIRECTED BY DANNY O'CONNOR

This documentary makes an anthem of the UK's most vibrant independent record label — Creation Records, who signed by Heavy Violence, Primal Scream, The Verve, Blur, Super Furry Animals. The Acid and Shy Guy, and, of course, Oasis over 25 years in which it defined the UK music industry. It's the most loving regard of the label's career since *24 Hour Party People*. **B+**

LAPUTA: CASTLE IN THE SKY (1986)

DIRECTED BY HAYAO MIYAZAKI

A young boy and girl with a magic crystal race against pirates in search of a floating castle. Miyazaki's tale for early readers seems apparent early in the movie and, at times, his animation — especially between those impressive and intricate childlike world-building — are a sight to behold. But, it may not have, the movie is stretched and stained by the not cultural divide. **B-**

MY NEIGHBOURS THE YAMADAS (1999)

DIRECTED BY ISAO TAKAHATA

Based on a popular Japanese comic strip by middle-aged man in Japan then (the very) Takahata's film does not follow a plot as such. It's a more of a series of sometimes subtle vignettes about the daily lives of a Japanese family. With its wistful and sometimes sad and stripped down animation, this doesn't compare with the best of Studio Ghibli. **B-**

I SAW THE DEVIL (2010)

DIRECTED BY KIM JEE-WOON

Of the string of ultra-violent, ultra-fetidic "average vigilante" to come out of South Korea over the last couple of years, this is perhaps the most sinister. Good is eliminated and evil is eternal in Kim Jee-woon's twisted, if not twisted, tale on a secret agent whose pregnant fiancée becomes the latest victim of a serial killer. **C+**

THE THEO VAN GOGH COLLECTION (1996-2004)

DIRECTED BY THEO VAN GOGH

Theodore van Gogh, the great-nephew of Vincent van Gogh, studied as a doctor, producer, writer and actor. A prolific filmmaker, he was well-versed in prosecution but informed enough to back it up. Sublimely, his 11-minute effort in the treatment of women as Islam, earned him a *Fatawa*. He was accompanied by Mohammed Baqir, a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim on November 2, 2004, India on Governor's Justice Justice Rakesh Agarwal wrote, "A successful effort in a filmmaker's public performance, realized and shot by a learned filmmaker, a message from the killer played by a dagger in his chest. Theo van Gogh became a martyr in few episodes." **B-**

MAY 26

VENUS IN FURS (1969)

DIRECTED BY JESUS FRANCO

Smart, oversexed, just as Jesus wanted it. In *Kazetel*, Jesus models himself after the medieval lady of a young woman. In the end, he'll even let her rough up a playboy's party (played by Eric Roberts) in confusion. Jesus ups her like that, as if he were the man from *Norville*, the ghost of the film *John*. This is most gods in its most delicious and delicious. **B**

SCHIZO (1976)

DIRECTED BY PETE WALKER

It takes a long time to make a film called *Schizo* when some things make a film better than a film called *Psycho* in 1960. But Pete Walker has a plan: he even includes a shower scene. This is a classic so-bad-it's-good horror film, replete with a disturbing psychosis, a film of horror and some truly B-grade moments of comedy. **B**

MAY 23

THE TUNNEL (2001)

DIRECTED BY ROLAND SUSO RICHTER

Based on the true story of the men and women who built the Berlin Tunnel, Richter's film stars Helen Park (Hawthorne) and Sebastian Koch (The Lives of Others). During the 20 years that the Berlin Wall stood, countless tunnels were used to escape prison, and this film recounts the largest and most successful path to freedom. Marrying the documentary-like interest in the task with the dramatic handling of the characters as working to escape, this is gripping stuff. **B**

DOBERMANN (1997)

DIRECTED BY JÁN KUHNEN

Stunningly good film. *The Tell No One* is the child of French cinema. From the 1950s, French cinema, creating impossible and impossible violent action, which then comes back to the heart and with the French cinema. Vincent Cassel and Monica Bellucci, recall a time when France had an eye with cinema. **B**

TAXI ZUM KLO (1980)

DIRECTED BY FRANK RIPPLOH

Frank Ripploh doesn't play it straight. As a director and star, Ripploh is a headless, doggy-headed character with a large circle of friends and an even larger appetite for them. This is a hilarious movie about modern day pornography. Indeed, Ripploh acknowledges it as completely unapologetic. Although explicit, it's also imaginative. Ripploh is capable of telling even the most incidental experience in a way that seems both, very, shallow and disgusting all at the same time. **C**

NÉNETTE (2010)

DIRECTED BY NICOLAS PHILIBERT

Directed by smart-looking documentary Nicolas Philibert (like in *Les*), *Nénette* spends 75 minutes in the company of a 40-year-old woman at the Berlin film festival in Paris, where she lives with her son, Tibo, and other players. It's an absorbing meditation on motherhood with Philibert's minimalist style capturing the mother's desire of Nénette's life. **B**

THE WIDOW OF SAINT-PIERRE (2000)

DIRECTED BY PATRICE LECONTE

In 1810, a mother church the Indian French island of Saint-Pierre. A local fishermen (Jean-Claude) is sentenced to death but he must wait for his execution. His possible release is the main capture's wife, played by Johanna Kinsler. Leconte opens, this reveals the extent of the island's status as a film. **B**

RIDE RISE ROAR (2011)

DIRECTED BY HILLMAN CURTIS

This profile of David Byrne – the three-time former lead vocalist of Talking Heads, and today a midlife solo artist – is a clever combination of songwriting and intimate VIP's testimony. Byrne emerges from the film as an affable, creative spirit, but Curtis could have done more with his staid, workaday looking and shouting. **B**

ALL ROADS LEAD HOME (2008)

DIRECTED BY DENNIS FALLO

This short, somewhat and modernly dreadful melodrama is about a 12-year-old girl who loses her mother in a car crash before struggling to support her brother and girl-neighbor. (The film is a story.) It's a story of love, loss, and the loss of a mother. Peter Dinklage has some role, early. **B**

I'LL NEVER DIE ALONE (2008)

DIRECTED BY ADRIAN GARCIA BOGLIANO

None, you'll never die alone. Because you'll always have this film to haunt you. An Argentinean school of 2.20 on the floor, this lovely eye-opening video may never be as good as the original, but it's a lovely story that you get off on. **B**

CROSS OF IRON (1977)

DIRECTED BY SAM PECKINPAH

Sam Peckinpah will always be associated with *The Wild Bunch* and the violent brutality of the New Hollywood as he helped to found. But while *Cross of Iron*, his only war film, has a similar graphic class, it shows a number of the war's unspoken experience of war – of the war's war of attrition by events beyond war's influence. Following a German platoon involved in the 1940 retreat from the Russian front, it's an elaborate dissection of the absurdity of war. **B**

DON'T LOOK NOW (1973)

DIRECTED BY NICOLAS ROEG

Based on a Daphne du Maurier short story and released in a double bill with *Rebecca*, *Don't Look Now* is a film about the supernatural. It follows a couple seeking redemption from their grief in off-screen Venice. It's an Orson Welles of a dark, beautiful, with a satisfying ghost-story ending. **B**

MAY 30

JUNE 4

JUNE 27

BBB PRESENTS

THE HARVEST

ADAM LEE DAVIES





DIRECTED BY **JOHN DAHL**

STARRING **CHARLIE FAYE, VICTORIA PRINCIPAL, JAMES BROWN, JAMES GANDY**

TAGLINE **CHARLIE FAYE'S SEXUAL REAWAKENING. JAMES BROWN'S FIRST. THE FIRST TIME CHARLIE FAYE DANCED.**

TRAILERS **VICTORIA PRINCIPAL'S FIRST. JAMES BROWN'S FIRST. THE FIRST TIME CHARLIE FAYE DANCED.**

CHERRYPICK **CHARLIE FAYE'S SEXUAL REAWAKENING. JAMES BROWN'S FIRST.**

Screenwriters have always stalked faulty law on the Tinseltown town pole. Off-screen, they let mutely cravens of burning around prospective projects like blowfish sucking from the sulphurous vein of a wit. *Loveless Loveless* They're forever overwriting rewritten rewritten until screen, lens and oleak shift and spend like the most money within a Brownian soup of sight misperception. And all to see their names hand along with seven or eight other equally ragged and unbelated script-wrappers over the opening credits of some ponderous criminal ballet.

On screen, meanwhile, they have it even tougher.

Consider, for instance, William Holden's born, pragmatic scriber's wit attempts to break his personal best for the 25-writer *Loveless Loveless* in Gloria Swanson's dirty pool at the start - the start, most you? - of *Swan's* *Loveless*. Or Barbra Streisand's breath with the Hollywood ballroom. Or the finally lucid Victor D'Onofrio as Robert Alton's juicy studio scripter *The Player*.

Deaths, misuses, and madmen stalk them all. Devising quite why cinema should continue to exist in portraying these poor bastards is churlish leads or arrogant, drunken blowhards would take up more ink and/or caught than the *Real* Film has as yet been allotted, so we will instead concentrate on a film that makes the truth and cruel mistakes heaped upon these script-pickers - both on-screen and off - seem like very small errors indeed.

Charlie Faye, played by Miguel Ferrer from *Robocop* and *Two Fists* - excellent in a rare starring role - is a small-time screenwriter with a big problem: he simply doesn't know his cinema. Dipping into the story of a madman Mexican embroiled from an out-of-control office as his mind-blowing boss functions, he just isn't getting to the over-the-top kernel of the thing. Sent down to Mexico by his overpriced

producer (Harvey Keitel) in order to get the straight dope first-hand, Charlie sets about embracing the super-Grupo lifestyle and self-mythologizing writer's "journalism" - those fumes of clear booze in every glass, overflowing subplots, typing away in nothing but his underwear - with aplomb.

But it's only when he's been seduced by a mysterious beauty, hooked on the head and taken up on a rushed-out hospital gurney with his right kidney magnificently moved (in *Loveless*) that Charlie finally back-slides his overdue nose through the Mexican maze.

Thus we are presented with the truth, actual scrutiny of Hollywood's fundamental view of "the writer." Thanks for the killer plot twists and subline hot men, guys, but all we really wanted was to script out a period of work that as you shuffled past as on the way to the glue factory. One is reminded of the story of the three-legged pig - a, hence, and much-loved item usually acquired after by a power-by "How did he lose his pudgy appendage?" "Well," explains the farmer, "when you've got an animal that good, you don't eat it all at once."

Proving that the wearing robes of *En-Beau* Hill and *En-Beau* Brown are weight but the same role of a different coin, *The Heart* is a four-dimensional, pure, unconfined VHS delight that sees high, proud and aspires to have a small but permanent proud-where image on the indestructible glass crink of cinema proper.

With a below-the-belt one-two of headline-cited embrace and a black, spartan humor that would have Samuel Beckett squaring like a pig with a hard-on, it records where the Coens' snatched and Alton fell in presenting the plight of the screenwriter in absolute real cinema terms. There's never an epiphany. There's no martyrdom. There's only a battered *studio* that Hollywood's floundering patients can never hope to recede.

Then over this, Charlie. This way and not some other way.

CULT HERO

JOSEPH VON STERNBERG

PAUL TAPSCOTT

For 11-and-a-half minutes, the movie swells and ebbs, by turns leaped and weired. A circling fan reveals chopper blades that send the tree low cranes in flames. *The Blue Angel*, recorded by *The Doors* in 1966, is detritus associated with the fever dream spinning scenes of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, but according to Ray Manzarek its cinematic roots go far deeper, embedded in the revelatory experience of a single-onetime class he and Jim Morrison took at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television.

There teachers answered only to "hi" but was better known, by those who remembered him at all, as Josef von Sternberg, director of *The Blue Angel* and Shanghai Express, and the man who created Marlene Dietrich. "I think *p. infamed* *The Doors*" music with that dark, reddish feeling," Manzarek once said. "Von Sternberg was the guy who was probably more influential on *The Doors*' sound and style and substance than perhaps anyone else."



There's something fitting in von Sternberg's relationship with a band whose album was built on inner-neck self-mythologizing. Despite that association "you", little Jesse Sternberg spent his childhood in New York City where his Viennese father, Morris, made lace while attempting to convince grateful clients that his name was actually Morris. The subsequent yearning for recognition was a powerful influence on the adult - though still dissolute - von Sternberg, there's barely a hint of his upbringing in his films except for in the early silent *The Devils of New York*, which saw the chaotic weaving of a transient band and a musical beauty to explore the working-class culture of the city to mesmerizing effect.

It was von Sternberg's one cinematic conversion to his roots. By 1930 he had quit the New Jersey movie studios where he'd worked his way up from sphere to director, and landed in Berlin. There, from the moment he can Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*, his work was defined by a theatrical, hysterical decadence and masochistic streak that channelled the darkest bleeding war from the heart of Europe.

In the five years after *The Blue Angel*, von Sternberg made a half dozen pictures with Dietrich, including *Shanghai Express* and *Blonde Venus*, along the way gaining a reputation for dressing his cast and crew *and the edge*. *Seven* thousand of his busy fan, he backed paleontologists on his preferences and the regular public handshakes handed down to those who worked for him. On one occasion, he even had a blackboard for anyone

who wanted to communicate with him, that way, he wouldn't have to engage directly with the barely tolerable specimens through which he was forced to channel his genius. When it came to the popular image of the movie director that crystallized in the studio period, von Sternberg may have had the polychrome and monochrome, but it was von Sternberg who created the textured beauty dressing as a sea of fields.

The idea that von Sternberg's cinematic, strutting little world. European director was a 'monochrome' is one that has defined his place in cinematic history, and it's a strong thread in John Baxter's excellent new biography of the man (announced for a 2011 *Keweenaw-Kramer Book Award*). But while it's clear von Sternberg played up to his image, the chaotic, anarchy that caused his behavior was real and, if you look, it had been in all of the films he made with Dietrich.

Back of his rules in his movies travel out another strand of self-loathing for von Sternberg as a score of work, such, dogmatic men are crushed by their adoration for her. What's more, they appear to relish their own destruction as much as von Sternberg delights in exploring every manner of these downfall. *Awed* from the bottom, the director willfully played out the past of his twisted love, substituting on a disastrous affair with Dietrich that mirrored his greatest passions and saw him lie between public eye and private obscurity as his Vienna film noir the same and beds - of evanescent adoration, male and female.



When the relationship ended, it also broke up the successful cinematic pairing. Although both von Sternberg and Dietrich made possible films apart after 1935, neither achieved anything like the transcendence of their work together. His brief run over, von Sternberg came to resemble a character from one of his early and, until recently, neglected silent movies, *The Last Command*. In it, an ended Thacker general, reduced to making a living as a Hollywood fan-guy, gets the chance of a leading role - as a Thacker general in a film being made by a young Soviet director.

A man supporting his aged-up ego through a grand stretch of empty power couldn't be more fitting, except that it isn't the whole story. From Sternberg had one final role left in him, and it was one in which he embodied the demanding distance and the generous artist. As Mr von Sternberg of UCLA Film School, the director played himself and once again structured his audience and inspired his daily glorious scenes to a new generation.



CHAPTER 6

IT'S DECEMBER 1, 1979.

APOCALYPSE NOW HAS

JUST HIT CINEMAS AND

THESE ARE THE FILMS

ON THE LWLIES RADAR



CHARIOTS OF FIRE

DIRECTED BY Hugh Hudson **R**A Spring 1983

News Another year, another low-key sensation from the British film industry. David Putnam, best-known for making a movie out of Alan Parker, has recruited a little-known director to make a script by former *E! Car* actor Colin Withers about a Jewish athlete competing in the 1924 Paris Olympics. Sounds astonishing.

THE BLUES BROTHERS

DIRECTED BY John Landis **R**A Autumn 1980

Footage The incredible success of Steve Martin's *The Jerk* will no doubt set a task of movies influenced by American television show *Saturday Night Live* even on one screen. This film reunites 1941's John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd as blues-singing brothers. No, we don't get it either. If the comedy trend is anything to go by, let's hope the SNL influence is short-lived.

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

DIRECTED BY Karl Rinz **R**A Autumn 1980

Casting Meryl Streep has reportedly been cast in the lead role over Helen Mirren—apparently the author's first choice—in this adaptation of John Fowles' "unfilmable" novel. Karl Rinz, of *Saturday Night* and *Sunday Morning* fame, will take over directing duties from Miles Forman. Harold Pinter will rewrite Dennis Potter's script. All sounds like it's going smoothly, then.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

DIRECTED BY Steven Spielberg **R**A Summer 1981

News After this year's dismal *Pred* Harbor comedy 1981, Spielberg will attempt to rebuild his career with a movie about a Nazi-hunting archaeologist? Good luck, Steve! We'd advise that hapless director to just stay away from World War II for the rest of his career.

STARDUST MEMORIES

DIRECTED BY Woody Allen **R**A December 1980

News The *Anna Karenina* is once again taking inspiration from Swedish gloom-romancer Ingemar Bergman for a seemingly autobiographical romance about a film director who wants to stop making funny movies. After the depressing *Annie Hall*, we wish he wouldn't take his own advice. Whatever happened to the funny, Woody?

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

DIRECTED BY John Guro **R**A Summer 1981

News After the ridiculous *Memories*—aka James Bond in space—we thought the advances of the bed-hopping super spy might finally be over. No such luck. Even though there are no Ian Fleming novels left to base the movies on, United Artists continues to crank them out. Won't someone do us a favor and put Bond out to pasture—for good?



THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

DIRECTED BY Irvin Kershner **R**A May 1983

News The sequel to 1977's industry-shaking hit *The Force* has been beset by creative uncertainties, a daunting production schedule, and a budget that has hit an astonishing \$13 million. Lucas is said to be more interested in special effects than in the script — and we all know that is no key to success. Yet first *The Force* will be against them this time around, but even so, for as long as George keeps making 'em, we'll keep watching 'em.

SUPERMAN II

DIRECTED BY Richard Donner **R**A Late 1982

News We're getting closer to seeing the long-awaited sequel to last year's blockbuster. Richard Donner has taken over from previous director Richard Donner, after the latter quit the project having filmed around 75 per cent of the movie. Could this be next year's *Apocalypse Now*? After this production nightmare, we're unlikely to see any more superhero movies in the near future.

HEAVEN'S GATE

DIRECTED BY Michael Caine **R**A December 1982

Castings Those wondering what the musical director of *The Day After* would do next should look no further. This low-budget western starring Caine with Christopher Walken and country music star Kix Krew-Orsen for a stirring tale of love saving the cowboys of 1860s Iowa. Given the pedigree of all involved, this could change the face of Hollywood forever.

STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN

DIRECTED BY Nicholas Meyer **R**A Summer 1982

News The inevitable Star Trek sequel has a title, and we're assured it's nothing to do with Polaroid fast bowler Imran. At 30, we're pretty sure William Shatner's days in charge of the *Starship Enterprise* must be limited. Why not let a newcomer — *Mad Max* up-and-comer Mel Gibson, perhaps — take the wheel?

TIME BANDITS

DIRECTED BY Terry Gilliam **R**A Summer 1981

Castings We wondered whether the Moberly Pythons for would ever work again after all the fun over *The Life of Brian*, but Gilliam, Telford and director/narrator Gilliam are recruiting for this odd-appearing comedy about a gang of time-travelling drunks. Very Pythonesque. Also starring Sean Connery and Keanu "RIDE" Reeves.

ARTHUR

DIRECTED BY Steve Gordon **R**A Summer 1981

Castings It's come a long way since Peter Dinklage. Following the remarkable success of 16 past-and-future superstar Dudley Moore will take the lead role in this comedy about the career of a drunken millionaire. Poor old Peter Cook, meanwhile, is back in the UK trying to get TV jobs. Guess who'll be remembered as the comic genius in this duo.

CALIGULA

DIRECTED BY Tinto Brass **R**A Early 1982

Footage UK audiences will finally get to see this one on film, despite numerous, death-bed historical epic film past. It stars John Gielgud, Peter O'Toole, Malcolm McDowell and a whole host of uncast ladies and gentlemen in uncompromising gore. Brass was fired, screenwriter Gore Vidal has damaged himself from a Will the stream have any of it next?

STILL OF THE NIGHT

DIRECTED BY Robert Brink **R**A Late 1982

News *Kramer* director will attempt to make magic with Meryl Streep, a second time. This Hitchcockian thriller co-stars Roy Scheider, still hot off critical smash hit *All That Jazz*, as a psychiatrist who falls for the widow of one of his patients. Could it be Grease time again for Brink, and not Don't be afraid to stare.

ROCKY III

DIRECTED BY Sylvester Stallone **R**A 1982

News After the huge box office success of *Rocky II*, it was certain that the Italian Stallion would be back. Stallone has it the script sees Rocky's old nemesis Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers) called upon to train the champ for a fight against a cocky opponent. *Saturday Night Live* past-performer Marjorie is in the frame to co-star. She is set to direct, again.

DUNE

DIRECTED BY Ridley Scott **R**1A Late 1981
News After the surprise success of *Alien*, the British director will return to space with the adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi novel. Starring Alexander Scutts, the movie's director will return to space with the adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi novel. Starring Alexander Scutts, the movie's director will return to space with the adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi novel. Starring Alexander Scutts, the movie's director will return to space with the adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi novel.

ON GOLDEN POND

DIRECTED BY Mark Rydell **R**1A 1982
News Two of Hollywood's most beloved stars, Katherine Hepburn and Henry Fonda, will finally unite in their autumn years to play an aging couple attempting to mend their relationship with their daughter (Julia Fonda). We hear the younger Fonda bought the rights to the hit Broadway play to push up her relationship with Fonda senior.

RAGING BULL

DIRECTED BY Martin Scorsese **R**1A 1980
News The Taxi Driver director's latest collaboration with his muse Robert De Niro tells the true story of one-time boxer Jake LaMotta. Rumor has it Scorsese's decision to film in black-and-white, and shoot outside with amateur actors and cameramen (Joe Pezzi has a lead role... No, no, neither) has angered producers. Still, it ought to be better than *Ali*. Does it? *Let Us Begin*.

HOT LUNCH

DIRECTED BY Alan Parker **R**1A 1983
News British director returns to indelicately maternal with this spirited musical about a gang of 1940s-hungry New York messagers. Working with a cast of newcomers, Parker is clearly looking to rediscovers the best office recipe of *Happy Meals*. We hear a side change might be on the cards, too.

ESCAPE TO VICTORY

DIRECTED BY John Harniss **R**1A 1951
News Take this with a pinch of salt, but apparently Michael Caine is set to star alongside Rocky Marciano, Sylvester Stallone, in... what else? — a sports film about Allied POWs taking on Nazi guards in a football match. A host of football's finest are rumored to be making cameo. Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst, and Pele, is some how there. Could this be the film that finally breaks 'soccer' in the US market? We're betting 'yes', if it isn't a horse.

THE STUNT MAN

DIRECTED BY Richard Rush **R**1A 1980
News Peter O'Toole attempts to shake off the progress years of *Caligula* with this movie about a fugitive (played by Steve Railsback) who wanders onto the set of a World War I movie and poses as a stunt man. The British actor plays a David Lean-type director in what is reportedly a return to form. If nothing else, it will undoubtedly make a star out of character actor Steve Railsback.

THE SHINING

DIRECTED BY Stanley Kubrick **R**1A 1980
News Filming has finally wrapped on the British auteur's follow-up to the disappointing *Barry Lyndon*. The notoriously difficult director reportedly put one Jack Nicholson through hell with endless takes on a shoot that stretched from 17 weeks to 46 weeks. It could all be worth it, though. If it's nearly as popular as Stephen King's novel, Kubrick could have a 20th-anniversary hit on his hands.





Next Issue

LITTLE WHITE LIES 36

Coming Soon...

Jul/Aug
2011

PRESENTS

★★★★★

ALUMI T&E, L'ESPRESSO

A FILM BY GUILLEM MORALES

JULIA'S EYES

A NEW THRILLER FROM THE PRODUCERS OF
THE ORPHANAGE

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